Concentrating on the Enemy

The Transformation Under-fire of Former Regime Militias into Post-Conflict Guerrillas

A Monograph

by

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14. ABSTRACT

By evaluating the critical capabilities, requirements, and vulnerabilities of the Saddam Fedayeen along the SoSA political, military, economic, social, infrastructure and information construct, and contrasting this framework with Iran and Basij militia, operational planners can potentially identify successful and unsuccessful patterns and methods to prevent the Basij from transitioning into a guerrilla force.

As larger force embedded throughout Iranian society, the Basij present a much more complex problem than the Saddam Fedayeen. It was preparing for guerrilla warfare and inculcated successful strategies into its training that were employed in the guerrilla war in Iraq, including suicide attacks.

The primary difference between the Saddam Fedayeen and the Iranian Basij was the ideological commitment of the members of the organization. The Saddam Fedayeen, a secular force that was personally and viciously attached to Saddam Hussein, fell apart over time after the death of Saddam's sons and the capture of Saddam Hussein. The members of the Saddam Fedayeen turned their loyalties towards Islamic guerilla organizations that were more successful because of their cultural affinity with the Iraqi, specifically Sunni, people. The ideology of the Basij was religious and therefore presented a much stronger link to the Islamic Revolutionary Government of Iran than the Saddam Fedayeen's loyalty to an individual.

15. SUBJECT TERMS

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Abstract

CONCENTRATING ON THE ENEMY, THE TRANSFORMATION UNDER-FIRE OF FORMER REGIME MILITIAS INTO POST-CONFLICT GUERILLAS by Lieutenant Colonel Charles A. Western, USMC, 92 pages.

This monograph is an examination of the transition of the Iraqi Saddam Fedayeen militia into a guerilla organization in an attempt to draw out methods that might be used against the Niruyeh Moghavemat Basij (Mobilisation Resistance Force) militia in the event of a war with Iran.

The examination will utilize Dr. Joe Strange's method of identifying the center of gravity and consequent critical vulnerabilities overlaying a System of Systems Analysis (SoSA) framework. By evaluating the critical capabilities, critical requirements, and critical vulnerabilities of the Saddam Fedayeen along the SoSA political, military, economic, social, infrastructure and information construct, and contrasting this framework with Iran and the Basij militia, operational planners can potentially identify successful and unsuccessful patterns and methods to prevent the Basij from transitioning into a guerrilla force.

Military means alone will not suffice to isolate the Basij from the people. As larger force embedded throughout Iranian society, the Basij present a much more complex problem than the Saddam Fedayeen. However, the Basij was similar to the Saddam Fedayeen in its participation in repressive acts at the behest of the government and is viewed with caution by many Iranians. It was preparing for guerilla warfare and inculcated successful strategies into its training that were employed in the guerilla war in Iraq, including suicide attacks.

There are some similarities along the PMESII spectrum between Iraq and Iran. Both sets of infrastructure were old and in need of repair and modernization. Both regimes strictly controlled the information flow in society. Both regimes knew that a conventional defense against U.S. conventional power is limited and have turned to asymmetrical means of defense, WMD and guerilla war primarily.

The primary difference between the Saddam Fedayeen and the Iranian Basij was the ideological commitment of the members of the organization. The Saddam Fedayeen, a secular force that was personally and viciously attached to Saddam Hussein, fell apart over time after the death of Saddam's sons and the capture of Saddam Hussein. The members of the Saddam Fedayeen turned their loyalties towards Islamic guerilla organizations that were more successful because of their cultural affinity with the Iraqi, specifically Sunni, people. The ideology of the Basij was religious and therefore presented a much stronger link to the Islamic Revolutionary Government of Iran than the Saddam Fedayeen's loyalty to an individual. This religious orientation makes some of the actions, such as deBa'athification, taken in Iraq to be impractical even counter-productive in Iran.

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INTRODUCTION

> Ever since men have thought and fought (sometimes in reverse order), attempts have been made to study war-philosophically, because the human mind loves, and needs to lean on, a frame of reference; practically, with the object of drawing useful lessons for the next war.[1]

At six o'clock in the morning, Friday, 21 March 2003, a four division conventional, mechanized force, consisting of one British and three American divisions, crossed the Iraqi-Kuwait border. Thus began the final episode of a conflict that had riveted the world's attention since 2 August 1991, when Saddam Hussein sent his army into Kuwait. Three weeks later U.S. forces were in Baghdad and Saddam Hussein's regime, which had terrorized the Iraqi people, Iraq's neighbors, and the world had fallen. With the conventional war won and Saddam Hussein a fugitive in his native country, George W. Bush, the President of the United States, arguably in the first flush of victory, declared that "major combat operations" were over. However, as subsequent events demonstrated, the President's declaration was premature and revealed some of the United States Government's underlying assumptions in deciding to invade Iraq. The conventional war to effect regime change in Iraq was over, but in truth, the next war was already beginning. The Coalition was so intent on getting to Baghdad and conducting regime change that they never took the time to defeat the enemy. Brooding amidst the snows of the Russian winter, Napoleon would have understood.[2]

Background

Inherent in the concept of regime change is the requirement to defeat or co-opt former elements of the regime into supporting the replacement government. During the 2003 invasion of

[1] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare, Theory and Practice* (St. Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishing, 2005), x.

[2] George F. Nafziger, *Napoleon's Invasion of Russia* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1988), 1. In 1812, Napoleon led the Grand Armee into Russia to defeat the Czar and reestablish the Continental System aimed at defeating Britain economically. To do this he would force the Russian Army to battle by threatening Moscow. He succeeded in capturing Moscow, but the Russians were not defeated. Instead, Moscow burned, forcing Napoleon into a devastating winter retreat. Fighting both weather and Russian soldiers, the Grand Armee was reduced to a shadow of its former strength.

Iraq by U.S. and Coalition forces, however, emphasis was on defeating Iraq's conventional forces, achieving a quick victory, changing the regime, and then withdrawing forces from a stable and secure Iraq relatively quickly.[3] Two years later, however, U.S. and Coalition forces are still in Iraq engaged in a counterinsurgency effort that is dangerously hindering the capability of U.S. forces to respond elsewhere in the world and, even more ominously, gradually sapping the will of the American public to maintain the new Iraqi government. In fact, the Coalition made little effort to bring former regime support into the fold, arguably, doing everything to prevent support from former regime elements by dissolving the army and instituting a strict deBa'athification policy.

Integral to this insurgency was the existence of pro-Saddam militias that used their existing chains of command, personnel, training, and equipment to continue the fight long after the regular army, and even the Republican Guard, laid down their arms. By failing to address adequately the conditions that encouraged continued allegiance to these militia organizations even after the fall of Saddam, U.S. and Coalition forces missed an opportunity to limit the size of the insurgency. If the United States is to continue a policy of regime change against unfriendly governments, and the capability to overthrow almost any government that exists in the world by conventional means, then it must also target the unconventional capability of those same unfriendly nations that exists and can resist or even prevent the achievement of U.S. goals. This is clearly the case with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Iran maintains a conventional military capability that makes it a regional power, if not a regional hegemon, but their equipment is old, either U.S. equipment pre-dating the revolution or Soviet equipment bought from cash-strapped, former Soviet bloc nations.[4] What makes the Iranian government powerful, and therefore dangerous, is the adherence of the populace to the government. Like the former Iraqi government, Iran maintains a robust militia in the form of the

[3] Gregory Fontenot, E.J. Degan, and David Tohn, *On Point: US Army in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), 47.

[4] Anthony H. Cordesman and Ahmed S. Hashim, *Iran: Dilemmas of Dual Containment* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 187.

Niruyeh Moghavemat Basij (referred to as the Basij, hereafter). Ideologically attached to the regime, centrally controlled by the Revolutionary Guard, but locally based, the Basij enforces morality, order, and security in support of the Islamic Republic.[5] Trained and officered by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the Basij therefore presents a large potential unconventional threat in the event of a conventional overthrow of the current Islamic regime.

Given Iran's strategic location in the world, their continuing enmity towards the United States, and an insistence on developing a nuclear program despite the efforts of the European Union the potential exists for a conflict to erupt between Iran and the United States or a Coalition of forces led by the United States. Assuming that the dominance of U.S. military power will overwhelm the conventional capabilities of the Iranian military as it did in Iraq, that leaves only unconventional warfare as a reasonable strategy for the Iranians to adopt and it is in this realm that the capabilities of the Basij militia of Iran become important.

Methodology

This monograph will attempt to shed some light on the following research question: Can the United States Armed Forces successfully prevent the Niruyeh Moghavemat Basij (Mobilisation Resistance Force) militia from transforming into an insurgency subsequent to the "Seize the Initiative" and "Dominate" phases of the operations?

The case study method will be employed to answer the research question by using a Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD) approach,[6] comparing the potential transformation of the Basij to the transformation of the militia organizations that existed in Iraq under Saddam Hussein into support for the post-conflict Anti-Iraqi Government (AIG) forces. This study will examine whether the United States has been successful in preventing militias from transforming into anti-

[5] Barry Rubin and Thomas A Keane, ed., *Armed Forces in the Middle East* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), 6.

[6] Todd Landman, *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 29. MSSD "seeks to compare political systems that share a host of common features in an effort to neutralize some differences while highlighting others."

government forces in past conflicts, specifically recent experience against Saddam Hussein's militia forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), in an effort to determine the conditions under which the transformation takes place. If possible, these conditions should then indicate approaches to take to limit the role of the Iranian Basij Militia in any future conflict between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

To assist in guiding the investigation, an operational Center of Gravity (COG) will be proposed for each militia organization. This COG will then be analyzed using a systems approach (political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, and information) to determine potential attack points leading to the reduction of respective COG. This systems approach leads to a more complete view of the interconnected operational environment and "allows planners to consider a broader set of options to focus limited resources, create desired effects, and achieve objectives."[7] With that said it is also important to note that this approach is not intended to be "Kind-hearted"[8] and must follow Clausewitz's dictum that "Destruction of the enemy forces is the overriding principle of war."[9] However, inherent in a systems approach to current and potential counterguerrilla operations is the understanding that military means alone will not suffice to achieve victory and that the United States will have a limited window, "fertile ground"[10] if you will, to prevent the eruption of a guerrilla war. That this fertile ground exists and is a natural response to an external invasion is not in dispute. However, the purpose of this monograph is to indicate ways to limit severely the chronological size of that fertile ground from which a guerrilla

[7] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operation Planning*, Revision Third Draft (3) (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 10 August 2005), iv-8.

[8] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 75. Clausewitz warned, "Kind-hearted people might think that there was some ingenious way to disarm or defeat an enemy without too much bloodshed."

[9] Ibid., 258.

[10] The phrase fertile ground refers to the preconditions that facilitate the growth of a guerilla war or insurgency as defined by Steven Metz and Raymond Millen, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century: Reconceptualizing Threat and Response* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies institute, 2004), 6, Available at http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB586.pdf, Internet, Accessed on 22 March 2006.

movement is born and therefore the chronological duration of the conflict in which the United States engages.

The study consists of four main parts, excluding this introductory chapter. The first part will examine the role of militias in Iraq under Saddam Hussein, focusing on the Saddam Fedayeen. The second part will examine the origins, development, and intended roles of the Iranian Niruyeh Moghavemat Basij militia organization. The third part will analyze the similarities and differences between the Iraqi Militias, specifically the Saddam Fedayeen, and the Iranian Basij to identify areas for further study that might contribute to their defeat or neutralization in a potential conflict. Finally, the fourth part will present the conclusions of this study and recommendations for further areas of study.

As a study, this monograph is primarily concerned with what Mao referred to as the first step in Guerrilla warfare, "Arousing and organizing the people," its application to Iraq in 2003 and in any future conflict with Iran.[11] This study is less concerned with any theory of counterguerrilla warfare except for those portions that might indicate methods to prevent the necessity of conducting counterinsurgency operations. Just as with counterinsurgency theory, the governments of Iraq and Iran are not within the purview of this study except for their roles in establishing the conditions that facilitate a transition of the militias into guerrilla fighters. However, some clarification of definitions is necessary to establish the start point for this inquiry.

Counterinsurgency or Counterguerrilla? The war in Iraq, initially a conventional one, has devolved into an unconventional battle between a highly trained, technologically superior Coalition force and a multitude of less well-trained and less well-equipped, but no less determined, bands of fighters. Is this then an insurgency as claimed by General John Abizaid or is it a guerrilla war and what difference does it make? Joint Publication 1-02 (JP 1-02), *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, defines an insurgency as "An organized

[11] Mao Tse-Tung, O*n Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1961), 43.

movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict."[12] Clearly, this definition does not fit the immediate aftermath of the regime change in 2003. Saddam Hussein and other elements of his government were either, captured, in flight or in hiding. What remained of his government continued to fight the Coalition initially out of loyalty or fear that the regime would once again survive. Finally, these elements were not fighting for "the overthrow of a constituted government" but to regain the political legitimacy that the Coalition destroyed when it seized Baghdad. In actuality, what was unfolding was not initially an insurgency but guerrilla warfare, defined again by JP 1-02 as "Military or paramilitary operations conducted in enemy-held or hostile territory by irregular, predominantly indigenous forces."[13] This definition more closely describes the situation of the Coalition forces between the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime and the first Iraqi election on 30 January 2005. This difference in definition is important for two reasons; the first is encapsulated by the phrase "you break it you bought it"[14] and the second closely related one is that of legitimacy. Under the Hague Conventions on land warfare, an occupying power "must insure, as far as possible, the maintenance of public order through the medium of the laws already in force."[15] In short, upon the occupation of Iraq, the United States military assumed the requirement to maintain order in those territories physically occupied by U.S. forces.[16] This includes protection of the populace and any public buildings or properties. This was not done in Baghdad. In fact, after the occupation of Baghdad, there was widespread looting of Iraqi government buildings by the Iraqis

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[12] U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 12 April 2001 [As amended through 7 October 2004]), 262.

[13] Ibid., 229.

[14] This is the "Pottery Barn rule" with which the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, cautioned the President on the conditions that would exist after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2006), 71.

[15] Leslie C. Green, *The Contemporary Law of Armed Conflict*, 2d ed. (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000), 256.

[16] Michael Walzer, *Arguing About War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 164. Walzer contends that this is a moral responsibility, though practical to avoid the circumstances that existed after WWI and WWII.

themselves. This contributed to a perception of lawlessness and the inability of the U.S. to maintain security. This leads directly to the problem of legitimacy. In a guerrilla war, such as that in post-Saddam Iraq, the perception of the legitimate exercise of authority must rest with the counterguerrilla or occupying forces. For the purposes of this monograph, legitimacy is defined as:

> A property of a rule or rule-making institution which itself exerts a pull towards compliance on those addressed normatively because those addressed believe that the rule or institution has come into being and operates in accordance with generally accepted principles of right process.[17]

The perception of legitimacy is as important for the occupying power as it is for the Guerrilla, "[b]ecause guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them, it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and cooperation."[18] The perceptions and allegiances of the people therefore are the key to preventing the development of conditions that support the initiation of guerrilla warfare. In other words, right makes might. To paraphrase another eminent Chinese soldier-philosopher, Sun Tzu, if in conventional warfare "supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting" how much more so does this apply in an unconventional fight where the very action of attacking the enemy may result in negative effects, or collateral damage, and a worsening operational situation?[19]

Systems of Systems Analysis (SoSA). Joint Warfighting Center Doctrine Pamphlet 4 defines a system of systems analysis as a "process that views the adversary as an interrelated system of political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, and information (PMESII) systems. SoSA attempts to identify, analyze, and relate the goals and objectives, organization, dependencies and inter-dependencies, external influences, weaknesses, vulnerabilities, and other

[17] Dr. Thomas M. Franck, past President of the American Society of International Law and Editor in Chief of the American Journal of International Law, in Phillip Bobbit, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2003), 643n.

[18] Mao, 44.

[19] Brig. Gen. T.R. Phillips, ed., *Roots of Strategy*, vol. 1, *The Art of War*, by Sun Tzu (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1985), 26.

aspects of the various systems."[20] By looking at a militia organization as a system, more options present themselves to a planner for avenues of approach to attack a center of gravity across the PMESII spectrum, than just strictly military ones. This is not entirely a new concept; the U.S. Marine Corps advanced over sixty years ago the concept that the "motive in small wars is not material destruction. It is usually a project dealing with the social, economic, and political development of the people."[21]

Center of Gravity. Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, defines a center of gravity as "[t]hose characteristics, capabilities, sources of power from which a military force derives its freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight." For the purposes of this monograph, the last element of the definition is the most pertinent. By combining an Operational Net Assessment and Dr. Strange's Center of Gravity Analysis, one can demonstrate potential ways to attack, that, which gives each respective militia organization the "will to fight."

COG Analysis. Despite the definition found in JP 1-02 noted above, Dr. Joe Strange proposed that "**centers of gravity are <u>not</u> characteristics, capabilities or locations**; they are the moral, political, and physical entities which **possess** certain characteristics and capabilities, or benefit from a given location/terrain"(Emphasis in the original).[22] Using this methodology facilitates the identification of "critical capabilities" defined as "Primary abilities which merits a Center of Gravity to be identified as such in the context of a given scenario situation or mission."[23] Critical capabilities have in their turn "critical requirements" defined as "essential

[20] Department of Defense, U.S. Joint Forces Command, Joint Warfighting Center, Joint Doctrine Pamphlet 4, *Doctrinal Implications of Operational Net Assessment* (Suffolk, VA: Government Printing Office, 24 February 2004), GL-3.

[21] U.S. Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1940), 18.

[22] Dr. Joe Strange, *Perspectives on Warfighting, Number 4, Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities* (Quantico, VA: Defense Automated Printing Service Center, 1996), 48.

[23] Ibid., 43.

conditions, resources and means for a critical capability to be fully operative."[24] From the critical requirements, or essential conditions, resources and means, are derived critical vulnerabilities defined as "critical requirements or COMPONENTS THEREOF which are deficient, or vulnerable to neutralization, interdiction or attack (moral/physical harm) in a manner achieving decisive results (Emphasis in the original)."[25] In short, instead of attacking the enemy's strength directly, Dr. Strange has provided an indirect method to attack it through a critical vulnerability, depriving him of his critical requirements, and thereby reducing the critical capability to conduct war that the enemy's Center of Gravity originally provided.

Delimitations

On the surface, the Iraqi Government of Saddam Hussein and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran appear very different. The former is a secular dictatorship under the complete control of one man and the latter is a theocratic democracy ostensibly responding to the will of the people within limitations as defined by the Koran and the unelected interpreters of the Koran. However, in some respects they are very similar. Both governments are finely tuned balancing acts to maintain each regime's hold on power.

For Saddam, this meant the creation of multiple, overlapping security structures to ensure that no rival person or organization could amass enough of a power base sufficient to threaten his hold on power.[26] As a result, during Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Republican Guard, regular army, and militias were controlled separately, preventing from the outset any truly effective, integrated defense.[27] For various reasons, including the army's history of conducting coups and possibly Saddam's own insecurity over never having served in uniform, he did not trust the army

[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Military Balance in the Middle East* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 291.
[27] Fontenot, Degan, and Tohn, 323.

and valued loyalty over military competence.[28] The Iraqi Army's primary mission was to defend the frontiers, although it also engaged in internal security operations albeit with some apparent reluctance on the part of the officer corps.[29] Because of several humiliating setbacks to the army in the Iran-Iraq War, Saddam established the Republican Guard by recruiting capable and loyal elements from the regular army. Provided with better equipment, training, benefits, and placed directly under the President, the Republican Guard Corps in effect became a "private army" dedicated to regime stability[30] "[u]sually, the RG is stationed between the regular army unit and the capital city."[31] However, during OIF, regular army units and Republican Guard, though separately controlled, actually fought intermingled compounding the difficulty of fighting the Coalition Forces.[32] The final conventional fighting force was the Special Republican Guard (SRG). Drawn from the larger Republican Guard due to their loyalty to the regime, the Special Republican Guard acted as a "Praetorian Guard" to defend Baghdad and Saddam Hussein, including the Republican Palace.[33] During OIF the SRG "remained in Baghdad, with the bulk of its troops west of the Tigris River and in a position to protect essential regime personnel and facilities."[34] In addition to these "fighting forces," there were several, smaller security and intelligence services whose primary mission is to conduct surveillance and report on members of the military and the government as well as the ordinary Iraqi. The result was a force structure that that was "better at watching one another and at securing the regime than at fighting."[35]

Just as in Iraq, the Iranian regime has developed multiple, overlapping security agencies to maintain its hold on power, the regular army and navy, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which maintains its own land and naval forces, and the Law Enforcement Forces

[28] Ibid., 208.
[29] Amatazia Baram in Rubin and Keane, 222-3.
[30] Ibid., 223.
[31] Ibid., 225.
[32] Cordesman, *The Military Balance*, 293.
[33] Anthony H. Cordesman, *Saddam's Last Circle: The Core Forces Likely to Protect Saddam in the Battle of Baghdad* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2003), 5.
[34] Fontenot, Degan, and Tohn, 152.
[35] Cordesman, *The Military Balance*, 291.

(LEF).[36] While the Army and the IRGC are subordinate to the Ministry of Defense, the LEF is subordinate to Ministry of the Interior and was formed in 1991 from urban police forces, rural gendarmerie, and revolutionary committees.[37] Significantly, "the senior leadership of the LEF consists of IRGC officers."[38] However, Iran's strategic picture from their perspective is not good. The United States was already perceived as a rival for influence in the Persian Gulf prior to 11 September 2001. The 1991 Gulf War resulted both in a greater military reliance on the United States by the Gulf States and in an increased military presence in the Persian Gulf.[39] Since then, U.S. influence has only increased with the overthrow of both Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq and the Taliban in Afghanistan as well as continued operations of U.S. military forces in those countries. In the face of overwhelming U.S. influence, Iran has focused on three strategies, to develop the capability to threaten "oil exports from the Persian Gulf," terror as a strategic weapon, and the development of "non-conventional weapons," specifically nuclear to offset American military might.[40] In accordance with this strategy, the Iranian Government has focused its defense spending on "naval forces, missiles and non-conventional weapons."[41] Isolated geographically, the Iranian Government has also isolated itself politically by providing support for international terrorism and its attempts to develop a nuclear capability. Despite these funding priorities, the Iranian Army is still a large, though ill trained, force of 350,000 men "organized into four corps, with four armored divisions, six infantry divisions, two commando brigades, and airborne division, and other smaller independent formations."[42] The army, however, is a remnant of the Shah's reign predominantly equipped with aging U.S. equipment, despite an effort to develop Iranian military industries and purchases from abroad. Along with the aging equipment

[36] Rubin and Keane, 238.
[37] Ibid., 241.
[38] Ibid., 238.
[39] Patrick Clawson, ed., McNair Paper 29, *Iran's Strategic Intentions and Capabilities* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 1994), 67.
[40] Rubin and Keane, 245.
[41] Ibid., 231.
[42] Cordesman, *The Military Balance*, 254.

came the political baggage of being a pre-revolution institution. Just as Saddam did not trust Iraqi armed forces, so to the mullahs who achieved power in 1979 viewed the military with suspicion and they also created mechanisms to ensure loyalty to the new regime. Initially, the new leadership conducted purges of the officer corps "to alter the ideological and religious outlook of the professional military."[43] However, the primary balance to the Army was the creation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

The IRGC was predominantly a land force of 120,000 men, but also had a small naval and air force.[44] The army was constitutionally "responsible for guarding the independence and territorial integrity of the country, as well as the order of the Islamic Republic."[45] In contrast under Article 150 of the Iranian Constitution, the IRGC "is to be maintained so that it may continue in its role of guarding the Revolution and its achievements."[46] The practical effect of this article of the Iranian constitution is that the IRGC maintains control of Iran's Scud missiles, chemical and biological warfare development, missile production, and weapons of mass destruction (WMD).[47] Just as in Iraq, only the force most ideologically attached to the regime maintains the WMD capability. Subordinate to the IRGC is the Qods (Jerusalem) Force responsible for foreign intelligence operations as well as training Iranians and others for unconventional warfare operations and terrorism.[48] Despite a history of cooperation during the Iran-Iraq War and attempts at joint operations between the regular Military and the IRGC, bureaucratic and ideological rivalries have resulted in limited joint warfare capability.[49]

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[43] Nikola B. Schahgaldian and Gina Barkhordarian, *The Iranian Military Under the Islamic Republic* (Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 1987), 22.

[44] Cordesman, *The Military Balance*, 263.

[45] Iran, *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, Article 143, Available from http://www.oefre. unibe. ch/law/icl/ir00000_html, Internet, Accessed on 11 August 2005.

[46] Ibid., Article 150.

[47] Cordesman, *The Military Balance*, 264.

[48] Ibid., 265.

[49] Ibid., 254.

Conclusion

In an attempt to answer the research question, "Can the United States Armed Forces successfully prevent the Niruyeh Moghavemat Basij (Mobilisation Resistance Force) militia from transforming into an insurgency concurrent to the 'Seize the Initiative' and 'Dominate' phases of the operations?"[50] This monograph will use center of gravity analysis and the elements of systems of systems analysis to examine the development and transition of the Saddam Fedayeen into an Anti-Iraqi Force fighting a guerrilla war and look for similarities between the context of the Iraq war and a potential future war with Iran.

In the larger context, there were seemingly many similarities between Saddam Hussein's government and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Both were "revolutionary" governments in that they overthrew an established order and reordered the state according to their ideology, Ba'athism in Iraq and Shia Islam in Iran. For various reasons, both governments also deeply distrusted their regular armed forces. As a result, both Iraq and Iran developed overlapping security structures to ensure political reliability. The strategic situations were also similar. Both desired "their place in the sun" as a regional power. Both had relatively weak conventional forces and as a result sought an asymmetric advantage, WMD or unconventional warfare, to deter their enemies, principally the United States. The apparent pursuit of nuclear weapons development in both cases resulted in international isolation and economic sanction. Ironically, in both cases, the attempt to overcome conventional military weakness actually brought the possibility of a conventional confrontation closer to fruition. This conventional confrontation in Iraq led to the defeat of the Iraqi Army and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. In the case of Iran, it is also likely that the United States will overmatch and defeat any conventional force fielded against it. As a result, any long-term resistance will not be conventional but as demonstrated in Iraq,

[50] In the new joint phasing construct, Phase 2 is Seize the Initiative and Phase 3 is Dominate. Phase 0 is Shape, Phase 1 is Deter, Phase 4 is Stabilize, and Phase 5 is Enable Civil Authorities which leads back into Phase 0 Shape. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operation Planning*, Revision Third Draft (3) iv-31.

unconventional. In short, a guerrilla war that eventually matures into an insurgency against any U.S. imposed government.

According to Mao, the first phase of a guerrilla war is "arousing and organizing the people." In Iraq, Saddam Hussein expected the people to rise up in the event of an invasion by the United States. The mechanism for ensuring that this would happen was the Saddam Fedayeen. When the Iraqi's initial attempts failed during the invasion, the Saddam Fedayeen transitioned to a basis for the ensuing guerrilla war. In the event of an invasion by the United States, the Iranian government also expects the people to rise up in defense of the Islamic Republic. In peacetime, the Iranian Basij exists to ensure morality and regime stability. In war, the Basij Militia, like the Saddam Fedayeen in Iraq, may become the basis for a guerrilla war of resistance. In the event of a war between the United States and Iran, to prevent a repeat of the Operation Iraqi Freedom experience, it is useful to look systematically at how the Saddam Fedayeen transitioned into the basis for a guerrilla organization and the conditions that permitted the transition to happen. In terms of a comparison between the two organizations, one final word of warning to the reader in the words of the philosopher Alisdair MacIntyre, "nothing proves anything except itself."[51]

[51] Nicholas Fearn, *Zeno and the Tortoise* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2001), 81.

THE SADDAM FEDAYEEN

> The current Iraqi guerrilla war grew from a defeated Hierarchical party-state structures. The army officer corps, Ba'athist party, and Fedayeen militia were secular state institutions drawn primarily from the ruling minority-Sunni Arab peoples. Much of the Hierarchy and interrelations of the state structure remain intact in the remnant guerrilla organization.[52]

Background

In 1994, Saddam Hussein tested the resolve of the Coalition by again threatening Kuwait. The reaction of the Coalition forces, Saddam's concern over the loyalty of his regular forces, and his subsequent need to "save face" resulted in the creation of a fanatically loyal organization called Saddam's Fedayeen or "Saddam's men of sacrifice."[53] Commanded primarily throughout its existence by Saddam's son Uday, it originally consisted of "10,000 to 15,000 [men] drawn from the regions most loyal to the Baath regime."[54] These were men who "could be relied upon to protect the President and his family, put down dissent and carry out much of the police's dirty work."[55] Essentially a private army, Uday used it to facilitate smuggling operations and attack political opponents.[56] In 1996 as the result of a discovery of a coup attempt involving members of the Republican Guard (RG) and Special Republican Guard (SRG), Saddam raised the status of the Fedayeen. Instead of just being a "strange cross between a goon squad and a Kamikaze brigade," they began receiving better recruits, training, and equipment to counter balance the RG and SRG, which in turn counterbalanced the regular army.[57] Established originally from fanatical thugs, by the time of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, the Fedayeen had developed into a "30,000

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[52] Lester W. Grau, "Guerrillas, Terrorists, and Intelligence Analysis," *Military Review* LXXXIV, no. 4 (July-August 2004): 42.

[53] Various sources put the creation of Saddam's Fedayeen in 1991, 1994, 1995 and 1996. The date used here is cited from Kenneth Pollack, *The Gathering Storm*: *The Case for Invading Iraq* (New York, NY: Random House, 2002), 121.

[54] Sharon Otterman, "What is the Fedayeen Saddam?" Council of Foreign Relations, updated 31 March 2003, Available from http://www.cfr.org/ background/background_iraq_fedayeen.php, Internet, Accessed on 21 August 2005.

[55] Martin Lumb, "The Fedayeen: Saddam's Loyal Force," BBC News, 24 March 2003, Available from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2881889.stm, Internet, Accessed on 21 August 2005.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Pollack, *The Gathering Storm*, 121.

to 40,000 man paramilitary group" that was a key element in maintaining regime stability and loyalty to Saddam Hussein.[58] As a result, it was believed that Saddam would keep them primarily in Baghdad to assist in turning the city into a "Mesopotamian Stalingrad."[59] Instead, Saddam sent elements of the Fedayeen into southern Iraq to both ensure loyalty of the military commanders and attempt to initiate a popular guerrilla war through force if necessary.[60] Operating primarily in the cities to negate the U.S. technological superiority, the Saddam Fedayeen conducted ambushes of smaller units and supply convoys, forcing the local population to participate at gunpoint. They also learned quickly to avoid larger conventional combat against U.S. combat units. Knowing he could not win conventionally, Saddam also reached out to "Islamist Organizations" to assist his jihad against the Americans. On 11 April 2003, a meeting was held between Islamist representatives and "senior commander's of the Saddam's Fedayeen"[61] to coordinate their efforts. Prior to the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Saddam Hussein introduced Arab fighters from throughout the Middle East into Iraq, and they had been trained by the Fedayeen.[62] By the end of April, the forces loyal to Saddam Hussein began to melt away, avoiding surrender. In Basra after the British declared it secure on 7 April, "several Iraqi Units abandoned their positions and either left the city or disappeared among Basra's citizens."[63] The collapse of the Iraqi security services, including local police, and the inability of the U.S. forces to secure the entire country resulted in the looting and unrest. It was during this time that the "remnants of the Baath Party and the Fedayeen death squads faded into the population and [have] reverted to a terrorist network."[64] For some members of the Saddam Fedayeen the order to "fade" into the population

[58] Otterman.
[59] Pollack, *The Gathering Storm*, 350.
[60] Otterman.
[61] Yossef Bodansky, *The Secret History of the Iraq War* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004), 279.
[62] Ibid., 252.
[63] Ibid., 222.
[64] Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld quoted in Jim Garamore, "Rumsfeld uses American history as Iraqi lesson" American Forces Press Service, Available from http://www.dix.army.mil/PAO/post03/post070303/RumsfeldUsesHistory.htm, Internet, Accessed on 10 December 2005.

occurred prior to the fall of Baghdad. They were ordered to "lay low" and initially communicated by messenger. Eventually the leadership arranged meetings to organize, plan, and conduct operations against Coalition forces.[65] Only four months after the fall of Baghdad, the "disorder was becoming purposeful and was designed to contest control of Iraq's cities in the central region with the American occupiers and to destabilize the postwar governmental Iraqi regime."[66] By the time President Bush declared an end to Major Combat Operations, the stage was set for a guerrilla war. Desperate for assistance, the government of Saddam Hussein had already introduced al-Qaeda affiliated, Islamic terrorists into Iraq. Pro-Saddam Ba'athists, including Saddam Fedayeen, were in hiding with access to arms and ammunition and the normal functions of state were frozen due to the invasion. Although generally satisfied that Saddam was gone, the Iraqi people remained at least uncertain if not hostile to the "Christian" occupation. After years of neglect, the Iraqi infrastructure was further damaged by the fighting and abandoned by the workers. The conditions were now set for a guerrilla war against the Coalition and the Saddam Fedayeen was organized and prepared to exploit them.

Systems of Systems Analysis

The key to winning a counterguerrilla operation politically "is the ruling power's ability to convince the population that they alone are the source of authority to conduct the business of the people."[67] In the immediate aftermath of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the ruling authority was the United States Government. As a result, it was incumbent upon the United States to convince the Iraqi people that the invasion was just and beneficial to the Iraqi people as a whole and that support for the guerrillas prevented them from receiving the benefits derived from the downfall of

[65] Iraq Today Staff, "In Fedayeen's Path, LongTerm Plans, Unlikely Organization," *Iraq Today*, 29 December 2003, Available from http://www.iraq-today.com/article.php?id=1054&sp=&searchstring=&section=7, Internet, Accessed on 12 November 2005.

[66] John Keegan, *The Iraq War* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2005), 220.

[67] Paraphrased from Christopher M. Ford, "Speak No Evil: Targeting a Population's Neutrality to Defeat an Insurgency," *Parameters* (Summer 2005): 58-59.

Saddam.[68] It failed to accomplish this task in the months immediately after the fall of Baghdad because it was unprepared to meet the needs of the Iraqi people as a result of fundamentally flawed strategic assumptions made in planning for the war.[69] First, was that "the Iraqis would rapidly move into peaceful mode, and second, that there would be a new political and economic spirit in the country."[70] These assumptions were based on the optimistic assurances of Iraqi expatriates that once Saddam was gone, the war would be over.[71] However, the guerrillas were not necessarily fighting to eject the Coalition forces; that was a means to an end. They were more concerned with "which Iraqis will take control of their country as the Coalition grip eases, how they will do so and with what degree of legitimacy."[72]

With this in mind, the critical capability of Saddam's Fedayeen was to remain in existence as a political force and representative of the "legitimate" Iraqi Government of Saddam Hussein. In this the Fedayeen were operating from a position of strength after years of indoctrination on the glories of Saddam and the "victories" of the Iran-Iraq War and the first Gulf War. In 2003, the fact that Iraq was invaded, "no matter how benevolent," was what enabled the Saddam Fedayeen to depict the Coalition as occupiers who had deposed an Arab Muslim leader.[73] This was a decisive factor in building alliances between resistance groups and enabled the guerrillas to generate support from even unlikely sources throughout the Arab world.[74]

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[68] Ibid., 59.

[69] Anthony H. Cordesman, *The War After the War, Strategic Lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan*, Significant Issues Series 26, no. 4, (Washington, DC: The CSIS Press, 2004), XIII.

[70] Daniel Goure, a Pentagon adviser from the Lexington Institute, in Jim Lobe, "Iraq: From Liberation to Counter-Insurgency in Less than 80 Days," *Inter Press News Service*, 18 June 2003, Available from http://www.commondreams.org/views03/0618-08.htm, Internet, Accessed on 25 September 2005.

[71] Mohammed Abdul Majid, former Iraqi Army Major that defected in 1991interviewd by Dan Rather in "Saddam's Enforcers," CBS News, 26 March 2003, Available from http://www. cbsnews.com/stories/ 2003/03/26/6ime.0II/ printable546259.shtml, Internet, Accessed on 21 August 2005.

[72] Simon Tisdal, "Phase Three: Civil War," *Guardian/UK*, 3 December 2003, Available from http://www.commondreams.org/scriptfiles/views03/1203-09.htm, Internet, Accessed on 12 November 2005.

[73] Bodansky, 502.

[74] Ibid., 278-279. According to Bodansky, Islamist volunteers flowed into Iraq to fight the Coalition from the beginning of the conflict.

The critical requirements for the Saddam Fedayeen to remain a force in Iraqi politics were the loyalty of the Iraqi people to Saddam Hussein, the infrastructure of the organization, and continuing domestic and international support for their cause. In the first case, as long as Saddam remained free, the illusion that he was in control of the guerrilla forces, had once again confounded the Coalition, and the possibility that Saddam would return to power were significant inducements to remain loyal to the Ba'athist Government. The Saddam Fedayeen maintained their infrastructure by initially going underground when the conventional phase of the war ended. However, they remained in contact, communicating by messenger to coordinate planning meetings. The remnants of the Saddam Fedayeen had no other choice but resistance because they knew that there was no place for them in the new Iraq, "no future," and quite probably prosecution for their crimes.[75] Despite this, the Saddam Fedayeen and other guerrilla groups believed that it was their resistance and "their blood sacrifice" that forced the United States to turn over power to the interim Iraqi government.[76] Ambassador Bremer's deBa'athification effort, closure of the ministry of defense, and demobilization of all Iraqi military and security services provided a pool of recruits who would also see themselves without a future in the new Iraq.[77] The deBa'athification effort itself alienated many Iraqis who "joined [the Baath Party] out of fear, pressure, and promises of better jobs, higher salaries and personal security."[78] In short, Bremer's decrees rejected all of the people and organizations whom the OIF planners initially were relying on to stabilize Iraq quickly. Internationally, access to finances, weapons, and additional support was facilitated by exiled former regime elements and other anti-American

[75] CanadianGrassroots.ca, "Only Death Will Stop the Fedayeen," Canadian Alliance Grassroots.com, 2003, Available from http://65.109.70.118//sections.php?artid=2544, Internet, Accessed on 21 August 2005.

[76] Tisdal.

[77] Judith S. Yaphe, "Turbulent Transition in Iraq: Can It Succeed?" *Strategic Forum* 208 (June 2004): 3. Judith Yaphe uses the word "fired."

[78] Ibid.

organizations, such as terrorist organizations, with an interest in defeating Coalition objectives in Iraq.[79]

Politically, the Fedayeen had three critical vulnerabilities; first, they were operating amongst a "politically conscious people," who did not necessarily look back fondly on Iraq under Saddam, second, that the Saddam Fedayeen were intent on creating instability could work against them if they appeared as the primary authors instead of the Coalition, and finally the introduction of Islamist extremist support. In fact as armed thugs "directly responsible for some of the Regime's most brutal acts," the Saddam Fedayeen had little to offer the people to gain or maintain support.[80] Their only political agenda was essentially negative in terms of opposition to the Coalition with no "overarching ideological framework" that would appeal to the Iraqi people.[81] With the introduction of the jihadist into the conflict came also an Islamic appeal that transcended the failing Ba'athist ideology. Even before the capture of Saddam, however, "[s]tarting in the fall [2003], a growing number of veteran Saddam's Fedayeen and Special Forces commanders who have been active in the ranks of the pro-Saddam Ba'athist insurgency forces have gravitated to the Islamist trend."[82] Between the lack of a vision from Saddam and reluctant support from the Iraqi people, members of the Saddam Fedayeen turned to other ideologies to "stay relevant" and distanced themselves from Saddam.[83]

Militarily, the critical capability of the Saddam Fedayeen was its ability to conduct guerrilla warfare in a time and manner of its own choosing. During the conventional phase, they had the advantage of surprise. American commanders did not anticipate the significant level of

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[79] From a January 2003 National Intelligence Council report cited in Michael R. Gordon, "Poor Intelligence Misled Troops about Risk of Drawn-Out War," *New York Times*, 20 October 2004, Available from http://globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/justify/2004/1020 intelligence.htm, Internet, Accessed on 25 September 2005.

[80] Otterman.

[81] Steven Metz and Raymond Millen, *Insurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan: Change and Continuity* NIC 2020 Project (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 10, Available from http:// www.cia.gov/ nic/PDF_GIF_2020_Support/2004_05_25_papers/insurgency.pdf, Internet, Accessed on 2 January 2006.

[82] Bodansky, 488.

[83] Ibid., 450.

guerrilla warfare they faced during the drive towards Baghdad.[84] "Intelligence Officials were convinced that American Soldiers would be greeted warmly when they pushed into southern Iraq. For example, one C.I.A. operative even suggested sneaking hundreds of small American flags into the country for grateful Iraqis to wave at their liberators."[85] Even after the fall of Baghdad, the guerrillas maintained some advantages over the Coalition forces. They knew the people, the culture, language, and understood the ground upon which the battle would be continued. The Coalition had been fully prepared to conduct a conventional campaign, but "there was too little research on important social, political, and cultural issues" that would reduce support for the former regime elements in the event of a guerrilla war.[86] Having been the targets of the military capabilities of the United States in two wars, the guerrillas knew that they could not fight them in open terrain. Instead, they made the cities the battlefield, to "most effectively neutralize the technological superiority of the Coalition forces," both kinetically and non-kinetically.[87] If the Coalition attacked in the cities, each instance of collateral damage could be used to increase support for the guerrillas domestically and internationally.

The military critical requirements for the Saddam Fedayeen to complete the transition into a full-fledged guerrilla war were time, local support, allies, and armaments. Coalition forces, who were unprepared or unable to limit effectively the activities of the Saddam loyalists, unintentionally supplied the time.[88] The Fedayeen used this time to reestablish contacts with other Ba'athist loyalists and develop into a guerrilla campaign. Plans for the war after the war "appear to have been planned by the Hussein regime while it was still in power."[89] This included establishing large weapons caches "in schools, hospitals and mosques as part of the strategy to

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[84] Otterman.

[85] Gordon. Lieutenant General McKiernan, commander of Coalition land forces, wisely declined this suggestion.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ford, 60.

[88] Cordesman, *The War after the War*, XII.

[89] Metz and Millen, 7.

turn the southern cities into bastions for the Saddam Fedayeen."[90] Many of these caches were still in place, unsecured by Coalition forces, and available to the guerrillas long after Baghdad fell.[91] These guerrilla warfare plans also included "a tactical alliance with Islamic Jihadists" to create a common front against the Coalition forces. The final critical requirement for the Saddam Fedayeen to conduct a guerrilla war was support amongst the people in their operating area, Mao's proverbial "sea."[92] The people would be their support base providing food and shelter as well as intelligence on Coalition operations.

The critical vulnerability for the Saddam Fedayeen was its close association with the Hussein Regime and its most notorious acts. They were Saddam's enforcers and "fanatically loyal to the dictator and his sons."[93] During the conventional phase of the war, the Saddam Fedayeen had forced civilians to fight the Coalition forces and executed military officers who showed any lack of enthusiasm or potential to withdraw from the fight. As a result, their own actions rendered hostile the sea in which they swam. The fall of Baghdad, the deaths of Saddam's sons, Uday and Qusay, and the final capture of Saddam himself, reduced their will to fight for a regime that no longer existed and now, apparently, would not return. Instead, some of their members, who were still anti-Coalition, looked to their erstwhile allies, the Islamic terrorists, while others joined other "patriotic," groups.[94]

In regards to economics, the critical capability possessed by the Saddam Fedayeen in the aftermath of the invasion was access to financing "with billions of U.S. dollars held by Iraq's former leaders."[95] "It appears that the first few months of the insurgency were fueled by money

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[90] Gordon.

[91] Grau, 42.

[92] Mao, 93. Mao used a metaphor describe the relationship between the people and the guerrilla as, respectively, the water (or sea) and the fish "who inhabit it." If the guerrilla alienated the people through mistreatment then he was "like a fish out of its native element" and could not survive.

[93] Rather.

[94] Conflicts Forum, "Assessing the Iraqi Resistance Movement," *Conflicts Forum Briefing Paper #1*, 1 August 2005, Available from http://conflictsforum.com, Internet, Accessed on 30 December 2005.

[95] Grau, 42.

stashed away during the Hussein regime."[96] In an occupied country that still suffered from the severe shock to all of its economic systems consequent to invasion, ready access to money facilitated the establishment of a guerrilla organization. Money was available for weapons, training, travel, intelligence, and, most importantly in the case of Iraq, recruitment. As brutal as the Saddam Fedayeen was under the Ba'athist regime, gaining support for its operations on an ideological basis would be unlikely. However, "[t]here is a fair body of evidence that in many insurgencies, only a small proportion of recruits joined the insurgents for political or ideological reasons. Situational actors - social pressure, family or tribal ties, coercion, and material incentives - are often of decisive importance."[97] In short, the Saddam Fedayeen provided the ideologically committed portion of the guerrilla war, what they needed were people willing, for whatever reasons, to attack Coalition forces.

Therefore, the critical requirement for the Saddam Fedayeen was not necessarily munitions but for recruits. They needed people desperate enough to put their lives in danger for material reasons. At least portions of these men were furnished when Ambassador Bremer dissolved the Iraqi Ministry of Defense and demobilized the army and other security organizations. Approximately 450,000 Iraqi men were thrown out of work "without salaries or other compensation."[98] This action was taken against the advice of the General Garner, the head of the Department of Defense' Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), who "understood that a large number of suddenly unemployed Iraqis from the military or the bureaucracy could not be dumped on an economy already suffering dislocation and high unemployment."[99] Ambassador Bremer's strict deBa'athification campaign also drove the very

[96] Metz and Millen, 11.

[97] Michael Eisenstadt, "The Sunni Arab Insurgency: A Spent or Rising Force?," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Watch #1028*, 26 August 2005, Available from http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/template C05.php?CID=2362, Internet, Accessed on 25 September 2005.

[98] Yaphe, 3.

[99] Ibid.

Iraqis that the Coalition required to reestablish the government and economy directly into the arms of the insurgents.[100]

The critical vulnerability of the Saddam Fedayeen, and other Former Regime Elements (FRE), was a vision of reestablishing the Ba'athist Party in control. The same Ba'athist Party, led by Saddam Hussein, that had devastated Iraq, killed hundreds of thousands of their own people, lost three wars, and resulted in an economy where the people suffered while the President built palaces for his own use. The vision of a "future" Iraq by resurrecting the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein suffered in comparison to what the United States could potentially offer. However, at the critical moment, the United States did not expect nor was prepared for the "10 weeks of chaos that followed the collapse of Hussein's government in early April."[101]

The Marine Corps' *Small Wars Manual* asserted that guerrilla warfare is as much a social phenomenon as it is a political or economic phenomenon.[102] In the case of Iraq, it was an attempt by the former regime elements (FRE), mainly Sunni and from Saddam's tribal area of Tikrit, to regain power and prevent the marginalization associated with being a minority. In this, they were supported by other Iraqi Sunnis who, while not necessarily pro-Saddam, did not want to lose the status they held under the Ba'athist regime. In fact, the numbers of Sunni Arabs that supported the guerrillas fluctuated "in response to political, military, economic, and social conditions."[103] The critical capability of the Saddam Fedayeen, therefore, was the ability to organize and conduct attacks on Coalition forces and critical infrastructure and then fade into the population.

The critical requirement to operationalize this capability was the intricate network of family and tribal relations that they could use to facilitate operations. The Saddam Fedayeen was primarily made up of young men drawn from tribal areas loyal to Saddam. As a result, their ability to operate effectively outside of their own tribal areas was limited because of the lack of

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[100] Bodansky, 450.
[101] Lobe.
[102] U.S. Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual*, 1-9.
[103] Eisenstadt.

social ties and their extreme brutality to the host populations. This assessment of the Saddam Fedayeen's limited operational reach due to the alienation of popular support is consistent with the concentrations of guerrilla attacks. In 2004, approximately 80 percent of the attacks were in the Sunni Triangle area of Iraq.[104] In a region where "Loyalties are to family, close associates, fellow villagers, and clan or tribal members" rate far above the patriotic loyalty to any specific government, the guerrillas operated where they knew they could get support because of who they or their parents were and not have to rely on the hope that the local population would be pro-Saddam or Anti-Coalition.[105]

Even before Operation Iraqi Freedom, a January 2003 National Intelligence Council assessment found that the resentment of the population would be based on the speed of transfer of power back to Iraqis and on the use of force in providing security and reconstruction.[106] This resentment, already present due to the invasion and humiliating defeat, was what fueled the guerrilla war. The very presence of the Coalition military forces in Iraq was a constant reminder of that defeat and the resulting civilian casualties from operations against the guerrillas only added to the resentment.[107]

However, the social critical vulnerability of the Saddam Fedayeen was their brutality and support for a regime that no longer existed. Despite the Sunni Arabs apparent support for the insurgency, they also viewed the guerrillas "with a degree of skepticism, and may therefore be open to alternative means of achieving their goals."[108] The fact remains, despite the presence of Coalition military forces, that the transfer of power to an Iraqi-led government took place. The number of Iraqis who voted and the success of the elections were indicators that progress was being made by the Coalition and established the context in which to attack the Saddam Fedayeen.

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[104] GlobalSecurity.org, Iraqi Insurgency Groups, Available from http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_insurgency.htm, Internet, Accessed on 12 November 2005.

[105] Grau, 44.

[106] Gordon.

[107] Lobe.

[108] Eisenstadt.

The critical capability of the guerrillas was their ability to directly affect the lives of the Iraqi people through attacks on the infrastructure. With the fall of the Hussein regime, the Coalition effectively assumed responsibility for Iraq, including a decrepit infrastructure resulting from thirty years of mismanagement and over ten years of embargo. The existing, but tenuous, national infrastructure made it a primary guerrilla target to convince the population that the new Iraqi government did not have the "authority to conduct the business of the people."[109] Prior to and during the initial invasion, the Coalition purposefully limited targeting of the Iraqi infrastructure. They understood that whatever infrastructure was destroyed would have to be rebuilt when the war was over. However, it was not understood that the infrastructure, especially the power grid, was in a crisis after years of neglect and collapsed of its own volition.[110] The health of the infrastructure was a major factor in the attitudes of the Iraqi population, both in their resentment towards the Coalition occupiers and confidence in the new Iraqi government.

The critical requirement was to prevent infrastructure development to enhance the Iraqi people's resentment of the Coalition, thereby reducing confidence in the New Iraqi Government. For a long-term solution, Iraqi confidence in their government had to be the Coalition's legacy for the country to remain stable and not devolve into civil war. Infrastructure development was critical to building the confidence of the Iraqi people in their own government.[111] Significantly, this was already understood by certain elements for the United States Government. Prior to the invasion, the January 2003 National Intelligence Council assessment also noted, "that quick restoration of service would be important to maintain the support of the Iraqi public."[112] What made the infrastructure an appealing target for the guerrillas, not to mention the inability of the Coalition to protect it all, was that by attacking the infrastructure, they directly affected the quality of life of the Iraqi people and decreased their confidence in the government and the

[109] Ford, 58-59.
[110] Gordon.
[111] Ford, 59.
[112] Gordon.

credibility of the Coalition. As a result, the guerrillas "undermined efforts to reconstruct and stabilize the country, carried the total American troop fatality level over one thousand, and led many in the U.S. and elsewhere to question whether the country can be pacified at all without a longer commitment than most consider palatable."[113]

Attacking the economic and industrial infrastructure of Iraq had three critical vulnerabilities for the guerrillas; time, resources, and vision. First, in destroying the infrastructure, they enhanced the resentment toward the Coalition but that worked only in the short term. Overtime, the guerrilla attacks focused less on the hard American targets and more on the "softer, less well–defended and more immediately available Iraqi targets. Closely related to the first critical vulnerability was the question of resources. As the Coalition began to flow resources into Iraq to repair the infrastructure and regenerate the economy, the Iraqi people saw the situation in a new light. The Coalition provided money and equipment, the guerillas only death and destruction. Instead of damaging the Coalition's legitimacy, the guerilla's continued attacks only reinforced the skepticism with which they were already viewed by a significant portion of the Sunni Arabs. Finally, though the Saddam Fedayeen and other FRE had sufficient resources to hire men to place IEDs, they did not and could not provide a convincing vision for a better future. As a result, the guerillas had nothing to offer in the long run and only succeeded in further alienating what should have been their primary support structure, the Sunni Arabs of Iraq.

The informational critical capability of the guerrillas was the ability to get their message out both domestically and internationally. By portraying himself as a Moslem leader defending the Arab people in Iraq from the Crusaders, Saddam Hussein set the stage and played into attitudes already extent in the Arab street. The United States had already "subjugated" one Islamic nation, Afghanistan; Iraq was next but would not be the last. By framing the conflict in these terms, this secular Ba'athist leader was able to mobilize support he would not have had

[113] GlobalSecurity.org.

originally. This was a primary theme of the guerrilla information operations campaign and has increased support "through a combination of terror and robust propaganda which portrays the Coalition as an unholy force bent on permanently occupying Iraq and robbing the country of its natural resources, and of perpetuating instability through its heavy-handed approach and lack of respect for the Iraqi people."[114] Not able to meet the Coalition forces militarily, the guerrillas were "able to make the political and psychological theater of operations decisive (since it was much easier for them to attain parity with the counterinsurgents in this sphere)." The updated version of the *The Small Wars Manual*, published by the United States Marine Corps in 2005, identifies the type of war the Coalition is fighting in Iraq as a "war of information."[115]

In the case of the Saddam Fedayeen, the critical requirement was the support of the Sunni mosques. The incitement of religious duty to fight the invader was a powerful force, especially when respected leaders preached it every Friday to an already receptive population. The main effort was to convince the Iraqi population that they would be better off when the Coalition leaves. In October 2004, a poll taken by *al-Ahali* newspaper in Baghdad, Mosul, and Dahur indicated that this has been successful to a degree, finding "that 63 percent of the respondents thought security would improve if the Coalition left Iraq."[116] This was more than just a war for the "hearts and minds," even passive sympathy does not aid the counterguerrilla in effective operations. However, unlike the counterguerrilla who requires positive support from the population, all the guerrilla needs in the "early stages" is neutrality from the population.[117] The poll results demonstrated the failure of the Coalition to gain the kind of real, positive support of the Iraqi people that would result in more effective counterguerrilla operations and eventual victory.

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[114] Ford, 54-55.

[115] U.S. Marine, Corps, *Small Wars Manua/21st Century* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 2005), 69.

[116] Ford, 55.

[117] Ibid., 53.

The critical vulnerability of the Saddam Fedayeen was the negative reputation they earned during the Hussein regime. "They [the Fedayeen] use a lot of fear, and horror . . . They scare the people. They are well trained. They are well trained in killing."[118] As a result, their appeal to the general populace was severely limited, having been principally involved in the oppression of Kurds, Shiites, and others suspected of disloyalty to the Hussein regime. Despite the propaganda directed at the Coalition about religious and economic imperialism, the Iraqi people have responded overwhelmingly to the opportunities to vote for their own leaders. This is not an option provided by the potential reinstatement of a Ba'athist regime in Baghdad and as a result, "large segments of the population may be co-opted into actively rejecting the insurgency."[119] The transition back to an Iraqi led government, supported by the Coalition, dealt the first significant blow to the propaganda flowing from the guerrillas, whether FRE or Islamic. The best information operation the Coalition conducted was the growing strength and capability of the new Iraqi government.

Conclusion

Despite the defeat of some Fedayeen elements in the conventional phase of the war, what gave the Saddam Fedayeen the strength and ability to transition into a guerrilla organization was that their essential infrastructure and network remained in existence and connected even after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Created originally to do the "dirty work" of the regime and as a counterbalance to the Republican Guard, they were not expected by the Coalition to fight during or after the war. Prior to the war, the Saddam Fedayeen enforced Hussein's rule and assisted in the oppression of various segments of Iraqi society. During the conventional phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Fedayeen forced civilians to fight and executed soldiers who would not. If the Coalition succeeded, as pointed out by the Chief of Staff for the British forces, the members of

[118] Rather. Mohammed Abdul Majid, a former Iraqi Army Major that defected in 1991, who claimed to have established the precursor organization to the Saddam Fedayeen.

[119] Ford, 64.

the Fedayeen would not have a place in a post-Saddam Iraq. As a result, to retain their previous status, they had to remain a viable, existing political power and enforce loyalty to the Hussein regime. Their tribal and family ties were critical to facilitating the transition from a regime enforcer and counterinsurgent to that of a guerrilla force.

Actions taken by the United States also facilitated this transition in several ways. First, the assumptions made by the United States, that the Coalition would be welcomed with open arms, Iraqi infrastructure would be easily repairable, and basic services reinstated shortly after the cessation of operations, were false. These assumptions were compounded by an emphasis on defeating the conventional forces and a lack of preparation, or reluctance, to immediately execute nation-building tasks required in the aftermath of regime-change. Finally, the extent of the deBa'athification policy drove the very people the Coalition needed to rebuild the country directly into the arms of the guerrillas. Upon the execution of regime change, the United States assumed the moral, if not legal, requirement to ensure security for the Iraqi people on a long-term basis. This was a requirement to conduct nation-building tasks and included convincing the Iraqi people of the legitimacy of the new government and the corresponding illegitimacy of the guerrillas, all amid the conditions of disorder and instability brought about by the invasion. In short, "U.S actions created a power vacuum instead of exploiting one."[120]

Waiting to take advantage of Coalition mistakes, uncertainty, and disorder of the post-invasion period were Islamic extremists. Introduced by Saddam Hussein as the result of a "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" policy, the presence of Islamic extremists actually hastened the demise of the Saddam Fedayeen. By manipulating the sentiments of the people and their residual resentment of the Coalition, the Islamic extremists potentially hijacked the original purpose of the guerrilla war from the FRE. To survive after the fall of Saddam Hussein, the Saddam Fedayeen transformed into a guerrilla organization, but they transformed because of the introduction of

[120] Cordesman, *The War after the War*, XII-XIII.

Islamic extremism as a competing and culturally more attractive ideology. However, if the Saddam Fedayeen had combined religious motivation with the protection of the political establishment, it would have had much more longevity and been much more dangerous. Just such a dangerous combination can be found in the Niruyeh Moghavemat Basij of Iran.

THE IRANIAN BASIJ

> Saddam's posturing about killing Americans in Iraqi cities was not without basis in fact. Indeed, the Iraqis did bring US forces to battle in their cities. Friends and adversaries alike watched OIF with keen interest. What did they learn?[121]

Background

On 4 November 1979, organized Iranian attackers overwhelmed the security of the United States Embassy in Tehran, initiating not only a hostage crisis that was to bring down one American President, while concurrently bringing another to prominence, but also created an enduring mutual enmity that exists to this day. The seizure of an embassy was a violation of international law and tantamount to a declaration of war. With only remnants of the Shah's army, considered untrustworthy at best by the leaders of the revolution, and facing a possible war with the U.S., on 26 November the Ayatollah Khomeini ordered the creation of the "Basij voluntary forces."[122] It was to be "a people's army' of twenty million . . . to defend the Islamic Republic against its internal enemies and what he [Khomeini] called the American intervention in Iran."[123] Therefore, from its very inception, the United States was the primary enemy of the Basij militia.

Initially established as an independent organization, the Basij was to be "commanded by clergy and manned by the deprived classes from urban slums who at the time were the most committed to the cause of the Islamic revolution."[124] The members received rudimentary military training "self-defense, night-watching, compass reading, recognition of military equipment, and some guerrilla and anti-guerrilla measures."[125] Nevertheless, their real status remained undetermined until the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War in September 1980. Shortly thereafter the Basij, as an organization, was subordinated to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC),

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[121] Fontenot, Degen, and Tohn, 386.

[122] NETIRAN.com, "An Interview with the Commander of the Basij Resistance Force," *Kayhan, Daily Newspaper*, vol 61, no. 17534, 25 November 2002: 12, Available from http://www.netiran.com/php/artp.php?id=2964, Internet, Accessed on 12 November 2005.

[123] Schahgaldian and Barkhordarian, 87.

[124] Ibid., 88.

[125] Ibid., 90.

and served both as a source of individual recruits and as units supporting operations of the Army and IRGC.[126] During the war, the Basij was to become famous for human wave attacks that relied more on Islamic zeal and promises of heaven than on any training or equipment received. In 1982, Khomeini, "as a special favour," allowed boys as young as twelve to join the Basij and they were "sent to the front where many of them 'martyred themselves.'"[127] The young volunteers were used to clear minefields with their bodies so IRGC units could advance against Iraqi positions.[128] The Iranians suffered almost 500,000 casualties during the "imposed" war.[129] In the aftermath of the war, the Iranians built fountains from which red tinted water flowed evoking the blood of the "martyrs" and memorializing their sacrifices in fighting against Saddam Hussein.

Since the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the mission of the Basij has been focused on internal security and regime support. However, the Basij has also spread and established "units" on university campuses, in government ministries, and in trade guilds.[130] Since before the Iran-Iraq War, the Basij was seen as instrumental for "fundamental societal change in accordance with Ayatollah Khomeyni's vision."[131] By offering an opportunity for upward mobility, the Basij has remained an attractive way for the disadvantaged to advance from the lower economic and cultural strata of society "into more prestigious, usually provincial, bureaucratic positions."[132] In return, the Basij members offer an intense loyalty towards the Supreme Leader, currently the

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[126] Ibid., 92.

[127] Efraim Karsh, *The Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988* (Oxford, Great Britain: Osprey Publishing, 2002), 39.

[128] Ibid., 37.

[129] Mark Bowden, "Among the Hostage Takers," *The Atlantic Monthly* 294, no. 5 (December 2004): 77.

[130] Islamic Republic News Agency, Iran: Basij Commander Lauds Ahmadinezhad for Espousing Basiji Values, trans. by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 7 July 2005, Available from http://www.fbis.cia.sgov/doc_lib/2005/007/10/IAP200507 10011010N.html, Internet, Accessed on 31 August 2005.

[131] Schahgaldian and Barkhordarian, 92.

[132] Ibid., 95.

Ayatollah Khameini.[133] As a result, the Basij acted as Islamic "Brown Shirts," brutally enforcing the regime's decrees and attempting to stamp out "dissent" wherever it is found.[134] At a rally, commemorating International Woman's Day held on 8 March 2004, "Using batons and force, the Basij pushed protestors-primarily women-to the ground and broke up the gathering."[135] During elections in Iran, the Basij, along with other conservative elements, were warned against "interference" in the democratic process.[136] Ideologically motivated and ruthlessly loyal to the regime in peacetime, the Basij also had a wartime mission to uphold.

After observing the rout of Saddam Hussein by American led forces in 1991, the Iranians realized that they could not defeat the United States in any conventional war. Instead, they turned to an asymmetric defense and planned for an unconventional war, terrorism, and weapons of mass destruction.[137] As a result, the Pasdaran, Persian for the IRGC, has conducted "large-scale, multiphase military maneuvers-complete with the deployment of ground troops and aerial combat units in 'asymmetric warfare' exercises."[138] The Iranian's observation of the second Gulf War in 2003, beginning with the overthrow of Saddam and resulting in an unexpected guerrilla war, only reinforced this focus on unconventional warfare. As a subordinate arm of the IRGC, the Basij has also "undergone military training and [sic] *irregular war*" [*emphasis added*].[139] The IRGC

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[133] Ardeshir Moaveni, "Volunteer Militia Seen as Key to Future Power Struggle in Iran," A EurasiaNet Commentary, 1 August 2003, Available from http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/ insight/articles/eav080103_pr.shtml, Internet, Accessed on 3 August 2005.

[134] Bowden, 86. The term "Brown Shirts" refers to the Sturm Abteilung or S.A. that facilitated Hitler's rise to power in 1930s Germany. They attacked the Nazi's political opponents, broke up opposing demonstrations and strikes, and attacked designated enemy's of the regime, including German Jews.

[135] Sena Christian and Chris Bunyan, "Iran: Women Attacked at Rally," *Off Our Backs* 34, no. 5/6 (May-June 2004): 5.

[136] Islamic Republic News Agency, Iranian Interior Minister Warns Volunteer Militia Not To Interfere in Election, trans. by Foreign Broadcast Information System, 25 May 2005, Available from. http://www.fbis.cia.sgov/doc_lib/2005/002/20/ IAP2005022 0000025N.html, Internet, Accessed on 31 August 2005.

[137] Ilan Berman, *Tehran Rising. Iran's Challenge to the United States* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 67.

[138] Ibid., 73.

[139] Islamic Republic News Agency, A Commander Says Iran's IRGC Highly Prepared to Respond to Foreign Threats, trans. by Foreign Broadcast Information System, 26 January 2005, Available from

therefore has developed the capability "to conduct the kind of low-intensity/guerrilla warfare that can only be defeated by direct engagement with land forces."[140] If a strategic lesson derived from the observations of counterguerilla operations in Iraq, as contended by Anthony Cordesman, was that the direct engagement of land forces against guerrillas is not the most efficient or effective method, then they must be attacked indirectly to prevent the guerrilla war from emerging.

System of Systems Analysis

Politically, the critical capability provided by the Basij has been a force that was ready and willing to "turn out en masse and at a moments notice to demonstrate on behalf of the regime and to help put down those engaged in public displays of dissent and 'immorality.'"[141] As a result, the political role of the Basij has evolved from only providing soldiers for the meat-grinder that was the Iran-Iraq War into a tool for the conservatives to maintain control of the population, and thereby, to maintain their power in Iran. By expanding their membership beyond Khomeini's original intent of recruiting just from the political base of the Islamic movement, the urban poor, the Basij has been able to make inroads into the university and professional classes. This has facilitated an expansion of political the control by the conservative, and unelected, part of the government over the Iranian population. According to Michael Eisentstadt, when regular Army and even the local IRGC units refused to open fire on fellow Iranians in 1994, Basij units were brought in and brutally quelled rioting in the northern city of Qazvin.[142] The Basij were used again in the same manner against student rioters in 1999 and 2003.[143] Even more than the IRGC,

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http://www.fbis.cia.sgov/doc_lib/2005/001/26/AP2005 01 60 0061N.html, Internet, Accessed on 31 August 2005.

[140] Cordesman, *The Military Balance*, 273.

[141] Bowden, 86.

[142] Rubin and Keane, 241.

[143] Jane's Information Group, "Security and Foreign Forces, Iran," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment-The Gulf States* (4 October 2005): 7, Available from http://www8.janes.com/Search/documentViewdo?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/gulfsu/irans070.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=Iranian%20Basij&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=GULFS&, Internet, Accessed on 8 January 2006.

the Ayatollahs in power relied on the Basij army of "twenty-million" to protect the regime and enforce the regime's version of Islamic social order.[144] The Basij has also been active in attempts to increase voter participation in the elections held in Iran presenting "plans to increase public participation and help majority participation at the ballot boxes."[145] However, participation of Basij forces in the electoral process reportedly took two forms. The first, allegedly, was an order that directed the Basij members to vote for particular parties of individuals, usually those chosen by the conservative mullahs who constituted the unelected portion of the Iranian Government. The second was that the Basij forcibly ensured that the population voted for clerically approved politicians. In the most recent presidential elections, "Rafsanjani and his supporters complained that the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and the pervasive Basij militia had strong-armed the electorate into voting for Ahmadinejad, himself a former Basiji prior to the Iran-Iraq War."[146] Significantly, once elected, President Ahmadinejad also appointed several "senior Basij operatives" to "official positions" in his government.[147]

Militarily, the Basij is assigned a critical role in the defense capacity of the Islamic Republic, both in terms of restraining internal dissent and in defending the Iranian borders. An indoctrinated and trained populace is "the ultimate guarantor of the regime and the territorial integrity of the country against occupation."[148] First, the Basij acts as a reserve component to fill

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[144] Berman, 18.

[145] Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Interview of General Seyyed Mohammed Hejazi, Commander of the Basij Forces, in *Tehran Siyasat-e Ruz*, 11 June 2005, trans. by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Available from http://wwwfbis.cia.sgov.gov/doc_lib/2005/006/14/IAP 20050614001002N.html, Internet, Accessed on 31 August 2005.

[146] Jane's Information Group, *Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst*, 1 December 2005, Available from http://www8.janes.com/Search/documentView.do?docId=/ content1/janesdata/mags/iwr/history/iwr2005 /iv12n176c.htm@current &pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=Iranian%20Basij&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=IWR&, Internet, Accessed on 13 January 2006.

[147] Jane's Information Group, "Iran backs Basij Islamists with heavy weapons," *Jane's Intelligence Watch Report*, 14 October 2005, Available from http://www8.janes.com/Search/documentView.do?docId= /content1/janesdata/mags/iwr/history/iwr2005/iv12n204a.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword= Iranian%20Basij&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=IWR&, Internet, Accessed on 8 January 2006.

[148] Department of the Army, 428th Military Intelligence Detachment (USAR), *The Basij Resistance Force*: *How They Fight Armies of the World*, 1998, Available from http://www.ngic.army.

out the "main combat" brigades of the IRGC in wartime and any "large-scale mobilization of the Iranian military will trigger a Basij call-up."[149] Secondly, the Basij trains to "deal with domestic unrest," participating in exercises to this end with both the Iranian army and the IRGC.[150] Finally, the Basij assisted in the training of foreign terrorists "such as Hezbollah and Hamas for guerrilla warfare."[151] The Basij had been familiar with the suicide tactics of terrorists since the Iran-Iraq War, where inspired "by religious and patriotic zeal, many volunteers strapped on explosive vests and threw themselves at Iraqi tanks."[152] Significantly, recent activity by the Basij again indicates that Iran is preparing for a guerrilla war against the United States.[153] Members of the Iranian parliament have condemned reports that the Basij is preparing military exercises involving the use of suicide bombers against a U.S. invasion.[154] Clearly, in anticipation of a U.S. invasion of Iran, the Basij is building an asymmetric capability based on observations from the events in Iraq.

Economically, due mainly to American enmity and its own self-destructive policies, Iran has yet to completely recover from the effects of the Islamic revolution almost thirty years ago. The state controlled economy is primarily based on petroleum, which constitutes 80 percent of exports, making it subject to inherent price fluctuations. An 11.2 percent unemployment rate, 15.5 percent inflation rate and an estimated 40 percent living below the poverty line contribute to popular unrest and accentuate regime security concerns.[155] In 2004, the unemployment rate for

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smil.mil/products/htf/NGIC-1122-0204-98/SC9.HTM, Internet, Accessed on 31 August 2005. This document is marked "Unclassified."

[149] Ibid.

[150] Rubin and Keane, 241.

[151] Berman, 18.

[152] Thomas Omestead, "Iran's Culture War," *U.S. News and World Report*, 27 July 1998, 34.

[153] Jane's Information Group, Iran Backs Basij Islamists.

[154] Jane's Information Group, *Jane's Intelligence Watch Report*, 6 September 2005, Available from http://www8.janes.com/Search/documentView.do?docId=/ content1/janesdata/mags/iwr/history/iwr2005/iv12n176c.htm@current &pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=Iranian%20Basij&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=IWR&, Internet, Accessed on 8 January 2006.

[155] All figures taken from Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook-Iran*, Available from http://www.cia.gov/ publications/factbook/geos/ir.html, Internet, Accessed on 12 November 2005. However, Berman reports that in 2002 50 percent of the population lived below the poverty line. Berman, 129.

those aged 18 to 29 was estimated at 31 percent.[156] Severe economic turmoil could have advantages and disadvantages. According to Eisenstadt in *Armed Forces of the Middle East*, situational actors such as severe economic distress could assist in recruiting, by enlarging the dispossessed and disaffected members of society.[157] This would make membership in an organization such as the Basij, attractive because of preferences in employment and educational opportunities. However, the Islamic state itself could have also been the target of this disaffection as the author of a failed economy. This perspective would reduce the attractiveness of membership in one of the key pillars of the state. Additionally, the Basij are technically volunteers, who rely on local mosques for financial support. However, "many thousand of them are full-time functionaries, so they and their families have to be compensated somehow, either through allocation of lump sums to so called Basij "resistance cells" by the network of local mosque preachers, or by sharing revenues from confiscations and fines levied by Basij members and Islamic associations attached to the mosques."[158] The critical factor is that with the election of President Ahmadinejad there is no prospect for economic change in the near future. According to Abbas Milani, the Director of the Iranian Studies Program at Stanford and Co-Director of the Iran Democracy Project at the Hoover Institution, the Iranian stock market reflected this gloomy outlook when, upon Mr. Ahmadinejad's election, it suffered the "single greatest plunge" in its history.[159]

Socially, despite its more publicized human wave attacks during the Iran-Iraq War, the primary role of the Basij has always been as a means of imposing the Islamic order on Iranian society, "often by force."[160] Since the end of the war, the Basij has actually expanded its presence in society by establishing Basij cells throughout government and other public and private

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[156] Jane's Information Group, *Jane's, Sentinel Security Assessment*.
[157] Eisenstadt.
[158] Schahgaldian and Barkhordarian, 97.
[159] Abbas Milani, "The Silver Lining in Iran: [Op-Ed]," *The New York Times*, 30 June 2005, Section A, 25.
[160] Berman, 5.

institutions. Basij members have been placed into positions for which their loyalty to the regime was the primary qualification with their competence only a secondary requirement.[161] President Ahmadinejad--as noted before, a former Basij member himself--has appointed "a number of senior Basij operatives" to positions in his government.[162] The effect of this has been to enhance the position of the Basij, and thereby its authority, as a force responsible for social order.[163] Despite the trappings of legitimate government, the Basij remains an instrument of force providing "backup" to the law enforcement forces during periods of social unrest.[164] The Basij has also been "allowed" by the authorities "to violent[ly] disperse peaceful demonstrators or arrest, search, harass, and interrogate persons targeted for criticising the government."[165]

As an agent of societal order, the Basij remained fundamentally locked in a revolutionary zeal, concentrated on fighting the spreading westernizing influence in Iranian society.[166] Interviews with their commanders have continued to be full of revolutionary jargon and reflect more concern with destroying satellite television receivers and imprisoning satellite service providers to prevent unauthorized, or unapproved, information from infiltrating into Iranian society. However, society has progressed since the revolution. While "opposed to American hegemonic ambitions in the Middle East and . . . Iran," attitudes toward the United States were less antagonistic, if not yet friendly.[167] In 2002, a poll commissioned by the Iranian *majles*, or parliament, found that 74 percent of those polled desired a dialogue with the United States while almost half responded that "Washington's policy towards Iran was 'to some extent correct.'"[168] Amongst the young people of Iran, millions chafe at the imposed societal restrictions because of a

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[161] Schahgaldian and Barkhordarian, 96.
[162] Jane's Information Group, Iran Backs Basij Islamists.
[163] Jane's Information Group, *Jane's Intelligence Watch Report*, 6 September.
[164] Rubin and Keane, 242.
[165] Jane's Information Group, *Jane's, Sentinel Security Assessment*.
[166] Mohsen Yazdi, "West Seeks to Repeat Angeles Experience in Iran; an Interview with Gholamussein Kolouli Dezfuli," *Ya Latharat Weekly Magazine* 9, no. 86 (24 October 2002): 7, Available from http:ww.netiran.com/php/artp.php?id=715, Internet, Accessed on 12 November 2005.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Berman, 129.

revolution they barely remember, if at all, and repeatedly engage in such illegal activities as watching western movies, listening to western music, and associating with those of the opposite sex.[169] When Basij members discover these activities, they intervene with strong-arm tactics, despite the fact that many of them are teenagers as well. As a result, the recruiting base of the Basij is also narrowing "despite promise of preferential placement in universities and jobs."[170] Moreover, according to Nikola B. Schahgaldian, a RAND researcher in *The Iranian Military under the Islamic Republic*, "all Basij members, especially women are encouraged to instill in their children the official ideology and teachings of Khomeyni. In this way, the regime hopes to ensure the continued existence of the Islamic government in Iran."[171] However, loyalty to the regime, even within the most committed members, appeared to be declining. Despite orders, IRGC members voted overwhelmingly for Khatami in the previous presidential election, 73 percent as opposed to only 69 percent of the general Iranian population.[172] This reflects a division within Iranian society as a whole that must extend to the members of the Basij as well. Finally, there is also an element of class-consciousness within Iranian society, where the Basij members are seen as "mainly illiterate people who only know the language of force."[173] Drawn mainly from the lower classes, illiterate, receiving their education and view of the world from the mosques, the Basij members support the government as a means of improving their lives and the lives of their families. The front line in the cultural war is most clearly depicted in the differences of outlook between the lower and upper classes in Iran. The young and relatively well off scions of the upper classes who enjoyed Western music, lifestyles, and better access to basic services were pitted against the poor whose only means of escape from poverty and poor urban planning was religion and the opportunities offered by the government.

[169] Omestead, 33.
[170] Ibid., 34.
[171] Schahgaldian and Barkhordarian, 96.
[172] Rubin and Keane, 241.
[173] Omestead, 34.

The discussion of Iranian infrastructure will focus on basic services normally provided by the government, specifically sewage, water, and electrical services.[174] In July 2005, the population of Iran was estimated at over 68 million and a median age of 24 years.[175] Therefore, over half of the Iranian population was born well after the 1979 Revolution and knew little of the actual conditions that existed under the Shah. These numbers also indicate that a significant expansion of government services would be required to support this burgeoning population and "rapid urban growth resulting in the proliferation of infomral [sic] settlements." However, according to the World Bank, this has not been the case and neither the national nor the local governments have been able to keep pace, resulting in a dearth of basic services in "areas that represent around 20-30% of the urban population and that are home to the poorest segments of the society."[176] This growth in population has been compounded "by an inefficient system of housing subsidies, an inactive land market controlled largely by the government, poor urban planning and constrained role of local governments."[177] As a result, despite the fact that 96 percent of the urban population has access to "public" water, only 16 percent were connected to a public sewer system, resulting in higher health risks as the untreated sewage polluted water sources.[178] This established a vicious cycle, where even though the bulk of the city-dwellers have access to water, it was likely to be contaminated with raw sewage from the groundwater supplies. The water supply in Iran was itself limited, with 90 percent allocated to agricultural uses. The quality of the water has also been affected by "[u]ncontrolled water use and other poor farming

[174] These elements are drawn from the SWEAT-MS model for logical lines of operations (LOO). Only, the S, W, & E, elements of the model are discussed, not just for space considerations, because in the author's opinion they are the ones that most directly, if subtly, affect the population's quality of life on a routine basis. These LOOs are described in The Department of the Army. FMI 5-0.1, *The Operations Process*, Final Draft-Not for implementation (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 5 October 2005), B-10.

[175] Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook Iran, 3-4.

[176] World Bank Group, Iran: World Bank to Support Urban Upgrading, Water Supply and Sanitation, News Release No:2004/379/MNA, Available from http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/IRANEXTN/0,,contentMDK:20206325~menuPK:312962~pagePK:141137~piPK:141127~theSitePK:312943,00.html, Internet, Accessed on 25 January 2006.

[177] Ibid.

[178] Ibid.

practices" as well as erosion of the current water control systems."[179] As a result, Iran will continue to face a persistent water crisis.

Population growth has also had a significant impact on the energy requirements of the Iranian people. Automobile production in Iran went from just 40,000 per year in the early 1990s to over 290,000 a year by 2001, a 27 percent average growth per year.[180] By 2004, this population increase and a growing economy resulted in a petroleum consumption rate of 1.5 million barrels per day (bbl/d), requiring Iran to actually import "160,000 bbl/d of gasoline at an estimated costs of $2-$3 billion."[181] Since petroleum constitutes over 80 percent of Iranian exports, it was therefore the chief monetary driver of the Iranian economy.[182] As Iranians consumed more oil domestically, less was available for export, reducing monetary reserves available to the government or causing scarce dollars to be spent on importing petroleum products into the country that, according to the Oil and Gas Journal, has "125.8 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, roughly 10 percent of the world's total."[183] Iran's oil infrastructure was old and reduced in effectiveness because most of the refineries were built before the Revolution.[184] Plans to modernize their facilities rely on significant foreign investment but Iran's current relations with the West minimize the amount of foreign capital willing to be invested.[185] According to a report on the Iranian economic infrastructure by Transparent Publishing, "Rapid growth in manufacturing, increased urbanization, and the extension of electrical services to more of the population have placed pressure on Iranian planners to build more power generation facilities

[179] Transparent Publishing, *Iran CD: Economy, Infrastructure*, 2005, Available from http://www.parker hill.com/iran/economy/infrastructure, Internet, Accessed on 25 January 2006.
[180] Transparent Publishing, *Iran CD: Economy, Non-Oil Industry*, 2005, Available from http://www.parkerhill.com/iran/economy/non_oil_industry, Internet, Accessed on 25 January 2006.
[181] Transparent Publishing, *Iran CD: Economy, Infrastructure*.
[182] Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook Iran, 9.
[183] Transparent Publishing, *Iran CD: Economy, The Oil Industry*, 2005, Available from http://www.parkerhill.com/iran/economy/oil_industry, Internet, Accessed on 25 January 2006.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid.

ahead of demand."[186] This energy crunch has resulted in a search for alternative energy sources. To the concern and suspicion of the United States and the European Union, Iran has begun developing nuclear facilities to generate the necessary power required by the growing population reportedly with plans for twenty nuclear power plants.[187] In fact, under the Shah in the 1970s plans had been made to build a nuclear power grid because of fears that Iran's oil supply would be depleted about the turn of the century.[188] Despite the increasing electrical requirements, energy production actually rose from 42 billion kilowatt hours in 1985 to 129 billion kilowatt hours in 2005.[189] This has included the extension of power to over 90 percent of Iran's rural inhabitants.[190] Currently, electrical power is distributed over three main grid networks; however, plans are being made to integrate them into one national grid system.[191]

The fact remains that Iran's basic services in sewage, water, and electricity, were under assault by a population growth that translated into increasing urbanization and energy requirements an aging infrastructure was ill equipped to support. As a result, a nation and government that prides itself on self-sufficiency has had to seek foreign investment to increase and modernize the national infrastructure. "As of July 2005, the World Bank has financed 48 operations in the country for a total original commitment of U.S. $3,413 million," comprising projects in health care and nutrition, sewerage, water supply, sanitation, urban modernization, and housing reform, amongst others.[192]

In information realm, the Basij had the benefit of location and presence. They had been present in every facet of Iranian society and daily life since 1979. During the Iran-Iraq War, the Basij operated out of the local mosques in the community to recruit for the war and enforce

[186] Transparent Publishing, *Iran CD: Economy, Infrastructure.*
[187] Ibid.
[188] Pollack, 259.
[189] Transparent Publishing, *Iran CD: Economy, Infrastructure.*
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid.
[192] World Bank Group.

Islamic social mores. Schahgaldian contended that this basing led to friction with the local mullahs over who was responsible for that district. "Both are empowered to mobilize crowds, spread the official doctrine, educate the youth, dispense patronage, and keep an eye on the neighborhood inhabitants."[193] Additionally, as a volunteer force, the mullah was required to support the Basij members as they carried out their duties. Estimates are that the Basij operated "9000 mosques and thousands of workplaces and educational institutions."[194] Currently, the Basij is organized into 740 battalions of 300 to 350 men each [roughly 222,000 to 259,000 men total].[195] In 1994, because of extensive rioting, better riot control training was introduced along with a more formalized rank and command structure. Additionally, the Basij created thirty-six "Ashura" battalions, specializing in internal security missions.[196] There are also female Basij units, in a 2004 interview with Minoo Aslani, the Director of the Female Basij Corps, she claimed a force of 3 million women in over 8,000 bases throughout Iran.[197] Active in intelligence gathering, these organizations among other things "inform on antiregime elements and identify their hideouts."[198] While these numbers may be an exaggeration intended to deter Iran's enemies, it was a fact that the Basij intended to grow more pervasive in society and increase its capability.[199] Military intelligence assessments suggested that the existence of already established networks and an organized, regionally-based infrastructure that could resist invasion or occupation meant an "occupying military force or special-operations force operating within the deep battle area or enemy rear must contend with a local population that has received military

[193] Schahgaldian and Barkhordarian, 97.

[194] Dilip Hiro. *The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), 106.

[195] Cordesman, *The Military Balance*, 265.

[196] Ibid.

[197] NETIRAN.com, "Interview with the Director of the Female Basij Corps," *Resalat, Daily Newspaper*, no. 5450, 25 November 2004, 13, Available from http://www.netiran.com/php/artp.php?id=2780, Internet, Accessed on 12 November 2005.

[198] Schahgaldian and Barkhordarian, 96.

[199] Islamic Republic News Agency, Iran: Basij Commander Lauds Ahmadinexhad for Espousing Basiji Values.

training."[200] In short, even if some Basij units were to resort to the human wave attacks that characterized the Iran-Iraq War, in all probability a chain-of-command would remain in existence capable of supporting a guerrilla war.

In accordance with their primary mission of internal security since the Iran-Iraq War, the Basij militia developed the capability to mobilize thousands of members in response to political or religious disruptions that might threaten the regime. In response to the riots of 1994, the Basij established thirty-six active duty Ashura battalions focused on riot control and capable of deploying anywhere within the country. Other responses would take the form of the action by the local Basij units within neighborhoods, schools, universities, and public organizations. This capability is based on the guiding principle that the Basij were the defenders of Iran and Islam, fighting a cultural as well as military war with outside enemies, and this principle has been repeatedly confirmed by the Iranian leadership. The primary purpose of this cultural invasion was to discredit a religious government in favor of a more secular one.[201] Moreover, the origin of this cultural attack on Iran was not just the west, but specifically the United States. The toppling of Saddam Hussein by a coalition led by the United States increased this sense of encroachment by the west. The United States has been the primary enemy of Iran since the toppling of the Shah in 1979 and the seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. Included in the same speech where President Ahmadinejad threatened to "wipe Israel off the map" was a revealing question regarding the United States and his chilling answer, "Is it possible for us to witness a world without America and Zionism? . . . You had best know that this slogan and this goal are attainable, and surely can be achieved."[202] In 2003, the Basij militia issued a statement blaming the U.S. for political unrest in Iran in 2003 and accusing the American government of employing "mercenaries" and

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[200] Department of the Army, 428th Military Intelligence Detachment.

[201] Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting News, Iran-Basij, *Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting*, 6 September 2001, Available from http://iribnews.ir/ Full_en.asp?news_id=131773, Internet, Accessed on 21 January 2006.

[202] Frank J. Gaffney, "Our War with Iran," *Washington Times*, 1 November 2005, Available from http: wwwebird.afis.mil/ebfiles/e20051101399448.html, Internet, Accessed on 1 November 2005.

"misusing student rallies to challenge the 'Sacred' Islamic establishment with the assistance of anti-Iranian satellite channels."[203] There was some truth to these allegations. According to William Samii, a Bernard M. Osher Fellow at the Hoover Institution and a regional analysis coordinator at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Iranian expatriates based in Los Angeles were broadcasting in Farsi on satellite TV and had been responsible for anti-government protests within Iran.[204] These broadcasts had apparently been effective enough for the Iranian Government to contract with the Government of Cuba "to jam alternative Iranian broadcasting from Los Angeles for fear of its seditious influence."[205] In a more pedestrian response to the putative broadcast by America of "seditious" material, Gholamhussein Kolouli Dezful, the Deputy Commander of the Basij Militia for Enjoining Good and Prohibiting Evil, stated that they have "focused our activities on identifying the distributors of satellite dishes who had produced 1,500 dishes" seizing over 12,000 satellite dishes by 2002.[206]

By the continuing barrage against the United States, Israel and the West, the Basij encouraged a siege mentality in Iran and built upon it to reinforce the legitimacy of the regime and their existence as a movement. They have been able to blame United States for any unrest in a province, vowing "to protect the Islamic establishment and its achievements."[207] These achievements included the development of nuclear facilities and the Basij "staged demonstrations and formed human chains in different parts of the country to show their support for Iran's legitimate right to develop nuclear power for peaceful purposes."[208] In addition to conducting demonstrations in favor of the government, the Basij took a more active role in targeting critics of

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[203] Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting News, Basij Vow to Protect Islamic System, *Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting*, 19 June 2003, Available from http://www.irnews/Full_en.asp?news_id=182090, Internet, Accessed on 21 January 2006.

[204] Abbas William Samii in Henry Sokolosi and Patrick Clawson, ed., *Checking Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, Non-Proliferation Policy Center, 94, Available from http://www.npec-web.org/books/CheckingIran.pdf, Internet, Accessed on 9 April 2005.

[205] Ibid., 11.

[206] Yazdi, 7.

[207] Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, Basij Vow to Protect Islamic System 2003.

[208] Ibid.

the government clashing with student protestors for democracy and female protestors for women's rights. For the Basij, it was a question of what "information" should the Iranian population be allowed to possess. Any information not approved by the government was part of a "cultural onslaught" that endangered Islam in Iran.[209] When Islam was endangered, it was the duty of all believers to defend it by Jihad. However, there were differing interpretations of the meaning of Jihad. One explanation of the term Jihad is that it was not necessarily a physical battle between enemy combatants, but a metaphysical battle within one's mind and soul "to live in the way that God had intended for human beings."[210] With this approach in view, "whoever wins the hearts and minds of the Basij can determine the course of developments" in Iran[211]

Conclusion

In 1979 when the Ayatollah Khomeini established the Basij, their mission was two-fold; protect Iran from an American military response to the seizure of the U.S. Embassy and the regime from counter-revolutionary threats, either monarchists or former fellow travelers. The Basij transformed from the so-called army of twenty million into an agency to impose the regime's form of Islamic order. They now undertake three key tasks; suppression of dissent, mobilization of the masses in support of the regime, and control of information. To achieve these tasks, the Basij expanded the organization, incorporating Basij "units" throughout Iranian society including government offices, trade unions, and the universities. Active duty units have also been established specializing in riot control to complement the regionally based reserve organizations capable of deploying in response to contingencies throughout Iran. As a constitutional reserve force for the IRGC and the army, the Basij conduct basic military training in anticipation of filling out IRGC brigades in the event of war. However, they also undertake actions the Army and

[209] Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting News, Iran-Basij.

[210] Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History* (New York, NY: Modern Library Paperback, 2002), 6.

[211] Moaveni.

IRGC believe beneath them or refuse to do, such as firing on fellow Iranians during riots in Qazvin. For these reasons, Ayatollah Khomeini appeared prescient when he created the Basij militia in 1979 as a solid base support for the religious regime. However, its importance waned after his death and the regime relied more on the IRGC. As the IRGC demonstrated some political independence, the Mullahs in control of Iran needed a loyal force to balance the IRGCs growing power. The influence of the Basij came full circle, and they were again considered the most loyal of forces by the conservative religious leadership. They played a key, if possibly coercive, role in the election of a former Basij member, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, to the Iranian Presidency. Finally, as President, Ahmadinejad confirmed the importance of the Basij in Iranian security issues by appointing Basij members to positions in his government.

Elected at a critical juncture characterized by discontent among the Iranian people over the failed promises of the reformers, Ahmadinejad faces real problems that cannot be solved by either religious or revolutionary rhetoric. Increasing population growth, already high unemployment rates, and aging infrastructure have combined to frustrate the revolutionary regime's requirement for self-sufficiency.[212] They were forced to seek international help to finance improvements in the nation's infrastructure. The World Bank allocated billions of dollars to Iran for both emergency purposes and long-term infrastructure improvement projects, despite Iran's probable continuing expenditure on nuclear weapons projects. What Ahmadinejad has successfully accomplished, however, has been to convince the Iranian population to support building nuclear power facilities within the context of national rights. In so doing, he reinforced the notion of Iran as a besieged nation, an economic, political, and military victim of the West, especially of the United States. This mentality was encouraged by the Basij and used to mobilize the population to support of the regime's "defense" of Islamic and Iranian culture against the decadent West. This has clearly exposed class differences within Iran. The urban poor, to whom

[212] Iran, Article 43.

Khomeini originally reached out when he established the Basij, see the Basij as a way to increase their position in society and operates as a social safety valve as well as ensuring a loyalty to the regime. For the other classes in society, the political, economic, and social restrictions that were instituted by the Islamic Republic are endured as long as there is some hope in the current democratic process.

Within these conditions, the Basij has continued to expand and prepare for a seemingly perpetual conflict with the West. The assistance provided in training terrorists and in building a domestic guerrilla warfare capability as methods to defend again the west was seemingly reinforced by lessons from the ongoing U.S.-Iraq War. Initiated, by a conventional attack that the Iraqi's were unable to resist, let alone defeat, the war quickly fell into a pattern of guerrilla warfare that frustrated American plans for a quick victory and a resounding message of democracy for the Middle East. Instead, the Basij concentrated on ideological and political indoctrination of their members and the populace with some attention paid to military training. This is a Maoist model: Ideological adherence to the movement was more important than military training; once committed to the movement, or in this case the regime, a guerrilla can always be trained and relied upon to execute his mission. In this manner, the Basij present the most potential for inhibiting a conventional regime change in Iran. By maintaining their organization and acting as guerrillas against occupation forces, just as the Saddam Fedayeen did, the Basij can not only prevent a quick regime-change, but also set the stage for a long, drawn-out, and politically unpalatable fight for the future of Iran.

ANALYSIS

> To defeat an insurgent, the counterinsurgent must apply a holistic response that combines military, political, and civil aspects in a manner that empowers the ruling power.[213]

Background

The end purpose of both the Saddam Fedayeen and the Niruyeh Moghavemat Basij (Mobilisation Resistance Force) militia was to keep the revolutionary regimes of Saddam Hussein and the Iranian Islamic Republic in power. The ways used by both organizations to enforce loyalty to the state were also similar: political oppression, supported by resort to physical violence against anti-regime elements if necessary. However, the means used to achieve these ends were very different. The Saddam Fedayeen was a relatively small force of only 30,000 to 40,000 men recruited primarily from the Tikrit area, the bastion of support for Saddam Hussein. The Basij, however, has become a much larger force numbering 90,000 active duty members with the capacity of mobilizing up to one million people.[214] More importantly, the Basij have extended their influence by organizing Basij units throughout the country and in all facets of Iranian society.

In Iran, the cultural battlefield itself is much more homogenous society than that of Saddam Hussein's Iraq. In OIF, Iraqi society was separated by three primary cultural and religious elements; Shia, Sunni, and Kurd. Iran, despite being only 51 percent ethnically Persian, has the significant unifying feature of a population that is 89 percent Shia Muslim.[215] The Basij have in fact developed into a cultural icon due to the deliberate glorification of their role during the Iran-Iraq War. This was an increasingly critical fact, as Iranians appear to grow more

[213] Ford, 59.
[214] Jane's Information Group, *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, 9.
[215] Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook-Iran*.

nostalgic for the "purer" times of the revolution and the war with Iraq.[216] The Saddam Fedayeen, in contrast, was born of Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Gulf War and Saddam's consequent fear of revolt by the army and, later, of his own Republican Guard.

Prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Saddam Fedayeen conducted brutal operations among the Kurdish and Shia populations in the North and South of Iraq. These operations were designed to create fear among the local population and thereby stabilize the regime. However, these operations also engendered hostility, which limited the Saddam Fedayeen's ability to conduct guerilla operations freely in those areas once they were under control of Coalition forces. In contrast, the Basij already have established local Basij militia organizations throughout Iran that would willingly provide support pro-Islamic regime guerilla elements in the event of foreign invasion. In this context, the religious devotion, nationalism, nostalgia, and a more pervasive organization would make the Basij a potentially much more dangerous enemy than the Saddam Fedayeen ever were in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

System of Systems Analysis

According to Thomas Franck's definition of legitimacy, the people of a nation determine the political legitimacy of a government, because "those addressed believe that the rule or institution has come into being and operates in accordance with generally accepted principles of right process." [217] After the fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, there ensued a struggle to influence "those addressed" that, in strict contrast to the previous Hussein regime or an envisioned future Ba'athist regime, the new interim government operated "in accordance with generally accepted principles of right process." For their part, the Saddam Fedayeen and other FRE organizations initially based their claim to legitimacy on Saddam Hussein as an Iraqi and Islamic leader. For the coalition, the "right process" was the defeat and overthrow of the oppressive regime of Saddam

[216] Babak Dehghanpisheh and Christopher Dickey, "Devoted and Defiant," *Newsweek*, 13 February 2006, 28.

[217] Bobbit, 643n.

Hussein. Despite the initial exuberance over the ousting of Saddam, however, this was still a very circumscribed legitimacy, the authority of occupation rather than the convictions of the Iraqi people. Consequently, this right process had the inherent weakness of foreign invasion that still affects the legitimacy of the current and elected government of Iraq. The Iraqi people know that even today what maintains the current government in power is not necessarily popular consent or the strength of the bureaucracy but the might of the coalition's armed forces. In the aftermath of the overthrow, the Saddam Fedayeen remained in existence as the representatives of the "legitimate" Iraqi government, still in active opposition to the foreign invaders and the later coalition "imposed" interim government. This would be the same critical capability that the Basij could afford to the Islamic Republic in the aftermath of an invasion. Whether the entire country was occupied or just portions of it, dedicated Basij organizations would remain in the occupied areas that could transition into an underground government and form the basis of a guerrilla war.

Based on the experience of the Saddam Fedayeen, some conclusions can be drawn as to what critical requirements the Basij would have to achieve to be effectively transition into a guerrilla force. They would have to maintain their organizational infrastructure and reopen the networks into and between units in the occupied areas. Despite temporary adverse circumstances, the Basij would have to enforce loyalty to and demonstrate the presence of the Islamic Republic, as the only legitimate government of Iran. Finally, they would have to gain access to foreign support and international financing. The support that Iran has provided to terrorist organization in the past, such as Hezbollah and Hamas would be important in getting some international support.[218] According to Berman, the Iranians may have provided sanctuary to al-Zarqawi during the battle of Fallujah in 2004, "where he visited training camps run by the *Pasdaran* [IRGC] and

[218] Berman, 19.

obtained logistical support for ongoing terrorist operations from the *Pasdaran's* Qods [Jerusalem] Force."[219]

Some critical vulnerabilities, however, do exist for the Basij in this scenario. Like most government bureaucracies, the Basij has a fixed hierarchy of command and maintains membership rosters, much like the records of the Saddam Fedayeen, which may be exploited to interdict the transition of the organization. There is already considerable friction that exists in the body politic due to the actions and repressive nature of the Basij. The Basij are seen as thugs and enforcers for the government. The allegations made against the Basij for bribery, coercion of voters, their actual participation in brutally breaking up protest demonstrations, and firing on fellow Iranians in Qazvin could potentially divide the Basij from the general Iraqi population. International support could also be limited, due to Iran's past policies towards their neighbors, insistence on developing nuclear weapons, and support for terrorism. The fact that Iran is neither Arab nor Sunni, both of which played an important role in garnering international support for Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War, would be an important consideration despite the sheltering of Zarqawi and al-Qaeda's attitude towards Shia Islam as heresy. In fact by past support for terrorism and Shia minorities, Iran very effectively isolated itself from not just the world but also from their fellow Islamic States in the region.

In Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Saddam Fedayeen not only conducted guerrilla warfare, but, more importantly, actually prepared to fight a guerrilla war before the coalition even crossed the Kuwait-Iraq border. Significantly, the Basij has built this critical capability by expanding their organization and conducting training in guerrilla warfare. This was a deliberate, military "choice of the weak who oppose the strong" throughout history.[220] It was also a logical one for the Iranian

[219] Ibid., 23.

[220] Gerard Chaliand, ed., *Guerrilla Strategies: An Historical Anthology from the Long March to Afghanistan* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 1.

leadership to make based on the overwhelming conventional power the Coalition, specifically the United States, demonstrated against Iraq in 2003.

To exercise this critical capability, the Iranians must meet certain critical requirements. The first would be popular support. The Saddam Fedayeen had popular support primarily in the Sunni Triangle area of Iraq, where developed familial and tribal networks existed to provide support. According to Che Guevara in his treatise *Guerrilla Warfare*, fighters that lack popular support were not true guerrillas, but bandits that would be "exterminated by the public force."[221] The extension of the Basij organizations throughout Iranian society, establishing networks based on membership in the organization and religious devotion, set the stage for widespread, if not very deep, popular support. Philosophically speaking, the next critical requirement was an ideological commitment to the regime. Primarily tribal and familial associations ensured the ideological commitment for the Saddam Fedayeen. However, for the Basij, this ideological commitment was closely related to their identity as Shia Muslims. If an attack against the Government of Iran were successfully characterized as an attack against Islam, the allegiance of the Basij to the Mullahs would be reinforced and would bring even anti-regime elements out in defense of the Mullahs. Next, just as the Saddam Fedayeen prepared for a guerrilla war with training, organization and equipment, the Basij have also conducted training in guerrilla warfare techniques. But they have also benefited from observing the evolution of the Iraqi guerilla's tactics against the Coalition and incorporated the lessons in their training, including suicide attacks. Finally, the Basij has already conducted combined training with other groups designated by the United States as terrorists, establishing links that would be useful in a war against a non-Muslim invader.

The Basij also has critical vulnerabilities in attempting to conduct guerrilla warfare. Despite strong support in the Sunni areas, the Saddam Fedayeen had largely forfeited popular

[221] Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare* (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1961), 17.

support throughout the rest of Iraq owing to their brutality towards the local populations before Operation Iraqi Freedom, and then during the war by impressing civilians to fight the coalition and executing of officers and soldiers who showed a lack of resolution in fighting the Coalition. Measured against Che Guevara's definition of guerrilla war above, the Fedayeen were no more than bandits outside of the Tikrit area and therefore vulnerable to coalition exploitation of the population. The Basij has already followed this brutal model, though reportedly not to the same degree, by attacks on regime opponents and harassment of individual Iranians who do not necessarily conform to their version of religious devotion. As a result, the Basij was regarded by many Iranians as little better than government-sponsored thugs. The next critical vulnerability would be the dissolution of the ideological commitment because of the organization's expansion. Material benefits offered to those who join, and the requirement for Iranian families to have representatives in the Basij, result in less ideologically committed recruits. This would make them vulnerable to exploitation if those benefits were reduced, denied, or better ones are offered.[222] Another critical vulnerability exhibited by both the Saddam Fedayeen and the Basij was a lack of training despite the rhetoric from Saddam or the Iranian Officials. During OIF, the Fedayeen conducted poorly coordinated attacks against the coalition more reminiscent of the Basij's human wave attacks in the Iran-Iraq War. They only achieved some success in urban fighting where U.S. conventional power was limited by the built-up areas and the proximity of civilians. Finally, just as the Saddam Fedayeen, who essentially fought for their country, had a different agenda in fighting the Coalition than the imported "foreign fighters," so too would the Basij. In the case of Iraq, Saddam imported foreign fighters to build international Islamic support but they were concerned only with killing Coalition soldiers and cared little for the people and institutions of the country. This provided a seam to exploit despite the common Islamic faith of the two forces. In the event of a war with the United States, the Iranians would also appeal for support based on

[222] Eisenstadt proposes that most people join guerrilla movements, he uses the word insurgencies, for just such material gain or other pressures instead of ideological commitment.

Islamic grounds. The result would likely be a flood of jihadists solely concerned with killing the infidel and driving them out of Islamic lands. Their targets would be determined by expediency and the future of Islam and not by any regard for the future of the local people or local infrastructure. In the aftermath, the foreign fighters would depart, suffused in their vision with victory and Islamic holiness, and leave the Iranians to rebuild their nation from what remains.

The invasion of any nation would introduce a severe shock to the local economic system. Fighting prevents the normal routines on which a country functions. Food does not get delivered to markets, workers do not go to factories or offices, and as a result money becomes scarce to buy the necessities of life, which are themselves becoming scarcer. As this transpired in Iraq, the Saddam Fedayeen was able to influence the population because it had ready access to cash. Even those who did not support Saddam or desire his return would plant improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to kill Coalition soldiers in return for money to feed their families.

Desperate people provided the Saddam Fedayeen a ready body of men from which to meet their critical requirement for recruits to carry out attacks against the coalition. The deBa'athifcation policy of the Coalition Provisional Authority significantly increased this pool by throwing hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians out of work when it dissolved the Ministry of Defense. In Iran, where high unemployment already exists especially amongst the youth, this pool already exists.[223] In addition, millions more depend on the government for support, which itself depends on the oil sector. This dependency on the government will only increase as President Ahmadinejad uses populist tactics to increase his position of power in the government. As a result, implementation of the same sort of "deBa'athification" policy would be even more disastrous because the primary bond to the government is closely tied to the Shia Islam faith and an occupying power could not "deIslamicize" the government in the same manner without reinforcing the notion that it is a war against Islam.

[223] According to *The World Factbook on Iran*, the unemployment rate was estimated at only 11.2 percent in 2004; however, Iranians living below the poverty line equaled 40 percent of the population.

There are critical vulnerabilities to exploit, however. The Government of the Islamic Republic has consistently failed to meet the people's economic expectations since the revolution almost thirty years ago. Just as support for the Saddam Fedayeen was tied to the failed economic realities of the Saddam Hussein Government, because of twelve long years of economic warfare with the Coalition, the possibility of a return to the Islamic Revolutionary Government also would potentially limit support for the Basij. One of the key supporting factions for the 1979 Revolution were the Bazaaris, or middle class merchants, but they also have been the community that suffered the most from poor economic policies. Outreach could be made to these disaffected factions "in an honest and faithful endeavor to assist them to resume their peaceful occupations and to protect them from the illegal demands made upon them by the malcontents."[224] Organizations and individuals should be selectively vetted to prevent the alienation of cohesive segments of society.

Socially, the critical capability of the Saddam Fedayeen was the ability to conduct attacks on the Coalition and then fade into the population. Facilitating this capability was the attitude of Sunnis who feared the probable loss of the protected status they enjoyed under Saddam Hussein if the Coalition were to win outright. The Basij would be in a much more favorable position in this respect than the Saddam Fedayeen because of their extensive organization and support from the Iranian Government as "the ultimate guarantor of the regime and the territorial integrity of the country against occupation." [225]

For the Saddam Fedayeen the critical requirement to operationalize this capability was the familial and tribal networks in the Sunni Triangle that enabled freedom of movement throughout the combat zone. The guerrillas operated in areas where they could get support in the form of supplies, food, shelter, and, not least, intelligence. This area expanded by the inclusion of other disaffected elements, which may or may not have supported Saddam, but to whom the

[224] U.S. Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual*, 4.
[225] Department of the Army, 428th Military Intelligence Detachment.

invasion and occupation brought dislocation and disruption of their lives. The Basij would have similar critical requirements but in a country with three times the population and four times the geographic area.[226] Their networks, however, would be much more extensive based on the widespread establishment of units throughout the country that could potentially provide support. Additionally, as the defenders of Islam and Iran, the Basij units could tap into both religious and nationalist emotions for support against an infidel occupying force.

The critical vulnerability of the Saddam Fedayeen was that they could effectively operate only in areas formerly loyal to Saddam where their networks existed. By their brutality, they had alienated potential support, either nationalist or religious, in other regions of Iraq.[227] Even in "loyal" areas, the guerrillas were viewed with skepticism because of their brutality and support for a regime that no longer existed. This was especially true in the light of the successful elections in January and December of 2005. For the Basij, while their established networks are more widespread throughout Iran than the Fedayeen were in Iraq, their active and reserve membership was less than one-half of one percent of the population, necessarily limiting their influence. Even if they mobilized their entire capacity of a million men, it would still be less than one and a half percent of the Iranian population. This would be where victory or defeat in the guerrilla war in Iraq most clearly impacts a potential war with Iran. The Iranians "hope that a U.S. failure [in Iraq] will blunt the impact of Iraq's liberation on their own restive population."[228] Therefore, the establishment of a successful, stand-alone democracy in Iraq and the subsequent withdrawal of Coalition forces would send a clear message. This would be a message not just to the Iranian Government but also to an Iranian population that already desired some form of interaction with the United States based on the Iranians Government's own poll. Despite the existence of an unelected superstructure that maintains a stranglehold over the government, Iran does have a

[226] Pollack, 382.
[227] There were reports of former Saddam Fedayeen fighting for Moqtada al-Sadr in an-Najaf.
[228] Berman, 78.

democratic system in place, one that should be buttressed by the actions of the United States and not diminished. Within this context the Basij, and the Islamic regime as a whole, could potentially lose much of its support from the Iranian people.

Popular support of a government is closely tied to the expected services that the government provides. Governments are expected to provide security to enable people to go about their lives without interference, but democracies are also expected to provide services that enhance the quality of life for their constituencies. In Iraq, the Fedayeen critical capability was to focus attacks on an already decrepit infrastructure to encourage discontent against the Coalition. The reduction in services enhanced the perceived deprivation of a Sunni population used to a relatively higher quality of life under Saddam. Stemming primarily from building projects under the Shah, Iran's infrastructure is also old and dilapidated, providing an easy method of encouraging anti-occupation sentiments and action.

For the attacks on the infrastructure to be successful, the Saddam Fedayeen had three critical requirements. First was the Coalition's failure to understand the affect of years of economic blockade, neglect, and cultural realities on the Iraqi Infrastructure. Second, and growing out of the first, was that the Coalition was unprepared to repair or modernize critical infrastructure nodes. Finally, by attacking infrastructure throughout the depth of the battlespace, the Saddam Fedayeen was able to prevent or delay the effects of the Coalition's early limited repair efforts. The effect on the Iraqi people was to erode support for the Coalition. That the richest country on Earth took months to get key infrastructure nodes up and operating was incomprehensible to the Iraqi people. The United States must not care enough or have ulterior motives in limiting infrastructure development. In the case of Iran, the population of which has been the most pro-American in the Middle East; any such delay in infrastructure repair and

development would enhance the activities of anti-occupation guerrilla organizations and reinforce the suspicion of the United States already espoused by the Basij and the Islamic regime.[229]

The critical vulnerability to this method of gaining popular support for the guerrillas, was that attacks on the infrastructure could be a two edged sword. In the case of Iraq, it further increased the existing skepticism towards the guerrillas. This tactic failed to dislodge the Coalition and instead the guerrillas began to be seen as the ones preventing an increase of the quality of life for the Iraqi populations. In the immediate aftermath of a regime change, guerrillas bring with them no building plan or money for infrastructure development. It is not in their interests to do so because infrastructure development requires stability and security. The focus of the guerillas is on building their organization and arousing the people against the occupation. Stability and security are the very conditions the guerillas have to deny to demonstrate their power and the ineffectiveness of the occupiers. It is a zero-sum game, as the occupation drags on, what popular support and consequent legitimacy the occupier has degrades and the guerrillas gain strength.[230] However, resources are one of the critical and overwhelming advantages that the United States could bring to play in a counterguerrilla fight, if it follows immediately on the heels of the occupation and if it is not delayed by poor planning or false assumptions. The fact is that the resources of the United States, if brought to bear early enough, play an even more important role in the information sphere of the Joint Operating Environment.[231]

In the information sphere, the United States has suffered from a negative perception throughout the Middle East for various political, social, and economic reasons. American support for tyrannical regimes and the rapid spread of globalization that appeared to favor the West at the

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[229] Berman, 131.

[230] Ford, 56.

[231] "Information will be at the heart of conflicts, enhancing battle command and affecting perceptions while empowering, degrading, or limiting capabilities." United States Joint Forces Command, *The Joint Operational Environment, The World Through 2020 and Beyond*. (Draft) (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 2005), 42, Available at http://www.dtic.mil/futurejointwarfare/strategic/joe_050805.doc, Internet, Accessed on 22 March 2006.

expense of many Islamic countries enhanced the perceived deprivation that already existed in the Muslim world.[232] American culture has also clashed in significant respects with the established traditions, not necessarily those set out in the Koran, in the Islamic world. The perceived "degeneracy and debauchery of the American way of life" was seen as a direct threat to Islam.[233] This allowed the Government of Saddam Hussein, long a secular and brutal dictator, to portray himself as an Arab hero and, more importantly, as a defender of Islam to a receptive public. For the same reasons the Ayatollah Khomeini identified the United States as the Great Satan and therefore an enemy it was a duty to fight. This meant that the informational critical capability of the Basij was that they too were defenders of Islam and Islamic Republic, fusing both religious and nationalist sentiment into support for their operations. For Saddam, a clearly secular leader, this attempt at religious fervor was a ploy to gain support that he would not have as just a Ba'athist leader. However, for the Islamic Republic of Iran, nationalist and religious sentiment is fundamentally fused by their constitution and personified by the Supreme leader, who concentrates both religious and national authority in his hands.

The critical requirement allowing the Saddam Fedayeen to spread their message and gain influence was, therefore, support from the Sunni Mosques, together with a receptive population. The very act of invasion engenders resentment against the invader, especially if portrayed by the guerillas in religious or racial terms and emphasize the invader as foreign and insidious. Even in the aftermath of Saddam's removal, local religious leaders assumed a power that forced coalition soldiers to deal through them to get supplies to the people, enhancing the mullah's status in the community and potentially limiting the influence of the Coalition.[234] For the Basij, they believe that they are already engaged in a cultural war against the decadence seeping into Iran from the

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[232] Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2004), 113.

[233] Ibid., 81.

[234] Nathaniel Fick, a Marine Officer in OIF, Interviewed by Bay Fang in *U.S. News & World Report*, 9 January 2006, 18.

West, especially the United States. Western music, television, and movies all introduce "dangerous" social mores that are un-Islamic and therefore anti-Iranian. The Iranian Government not only attempts to limit western influence by seizing satellite receivers and arresting satellite providers, but has also arrested journalists and closed down hundreds of newspapers leading the "UN General Assembly in 2004 to formally express 'serious concern' about the 'continuing violations of human rights' in Iran."[235]

For the Saddam Fedayeen, their critical vulnerabilities were threefold. First was their history of repression that limited their influence even among their ostensible power base, the Sunni minority. The second critical vulnerability was the response of Iraqi people to the opportunity to vote for their own leaders. Finally, there was the installation of an Iraqi Government that was not controlled, if necessarily influenced, by the United States. All three of the critical vulnerabilities that plagued the Saddam Fedayeen are apparent in the Iranian Government and the Basij. Like the Saddam Fedayeen, the Basij also were perceived as a tool of repression used by the government to limit the freedoms of the Iranian people. In Iran, despite the establishment of an elective form of government by the constitution, the Iranian people could only vote for approved candidates.[236] The approving authority was the Guardian Council, which was constitutionally mandated to supervise presidential and Islamic Consultative Assembly (ICA), or parliamentary, elections. It consisted of a body of twelve men, "six religious men conscious of the present needs and the issues of the day" personally selected by the Supreme Leader and six jurists "to be elected by the Islamic Consultative Assembly from among the Muslim jurists nominated by the Head of Judicial Power."[237] In addition to supervising elections, this same body is charged by Article 94 of the Constitution to review all legislation passed by the

[235] Berman, 130.
[236] Jane's Information Group, *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, 8.
[237] Iran, Article 91.

ICA "to ensure its compatibility with Islam and the Constitution."[238] In fact, the Islamic Consultative Assembly "does not hold any legal status if there is no Guardian Council in existence."[239] The result was a thorough stranglehold on the governmental levers of power that severely limited democratic dissent and action. In 2004, Ambeyi Ligabo, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, noted in a report to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights "that a major impediment to reform consists of various institutional locks on governmental, parliamentary and judicial processes resulting from the control exercised thereon by unelected institutions and bodies that are not accountable to the people."[240] The freedom to elect an Iraqi government in itself will assist the United States in the event of an invasion and occupation of Iran, by setting a precedent of installing a government that is responsive to the people and not to an unelected few or a foreign power. Finally, an occupying power cannot get around the fact that invasion, and the inherent destruction that accompanies it, naturally breeds resentment. However this was not a new problem, the *Small Wars Manual* addressed this natural reaction and recommended that to "off-set this situation, recourse must be had to propaganda clearly stating the definite purpose of the intervening forces to show the friendly aid that is being offered to the country."[241] This is a task much easier said than done, but it must be accomplished and cannot wait for the actual initiation of hostilities. In short, to succeed effectively and efficiently the purpose of the United States in the event of an invasion of Iran must be made clear to the people, reinforced by both military and civil measures, and not subverted by American actions or false assumptions.

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[238] Ibid., Article 94.

[239] Ibid., Article 93.

[240] United Nations, Report Submitted By The Special Rapporteur on the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Ambeyi Ligabo on His Mission to the Islamic Republic of Iran, 4 to 10 November 2003. New York: Commission on Human Rights, Sixteenth Session. 12 January 2004, Available from http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/E.CN.4.2004.62.Add.2.En? Opendocument, Internet, Accessed on 21 February 2006.

[241] U.S. Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual*, 4.

Conclusion

The Saddam Fedayeen presented an example of a guerilla force that rapidly lost its effectiveness and provided clues to defeating other militia organizations such as the Basij if they transition into guerilla units. There were several similarities between the Basij and the Saddam Fedayeen. Both militias used force to support their regimes and consequently alienated potential support. Both had a plan of action prior to the initiation of hostilities and were prepared to conduct guerrilla warfare. Both the Saddam Fedayeen and the Basij trained with international terrorist organizations, facilitating useful support links and acquiring new tactics. Both organizations were ideologically committed to support their regimes, making any attempt to transition to, or co-opt their support for, succeeding governments impractical. Finally, both the Saddam Fedayeen and the Basij were representatives of near failed states as a result of economic isolation. For these reasons it would appear that the Basij may then be attacked and successfully defeated in the same manner as the Saddam Fedayeen. However, there were also fundamental differences that make the Basij a much more complex problem than the Saddam Fedayeen.

Unlike the Saddam Fedayeen, however, the Basij was not just ideologically committed, but also religiously committed. The Fedayeen was a secular nationalist organization that actually lost support to Islamic based guerilla organizations as support for Saddam Hussein waned. The Basij, however, would have the immediate advantage of combined religious and nationalist support from the beginning of hostilities. Almost 90 percent of Iranians, by geography if not ethnicity, are Shia Muslim.[242] The Islamic religion is enshrined in the political system by the constitution, associating nationalist and Islamic sentiment with loyalty to the regime. Additionally, Basij members are "encouraged to instill in their children the official ideology and teachings of Khomeyni" to ensure loyalty to the regime from a young age.[243] This makes any

[242] Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook Iran.
[243] Schahgaldian and Barkhordarin, 96.

attempt to conduct a deBa'athification-type change of government practically infeasible. The religious character of the movement also enhances the potential for support throughout the country from the local mosques and the local people, who know only that non-Muslims or infidels have invaded their country. The situation is further complicated by the Basij belief that they are already engaged in a culture war with western civilization, drawing a deliberate distinction between the moral "rightness" of Iranian society and the decadence of the west.

This primarily religious, rather than tribal or familial, affiliation would make the Basij more acceptable to the people in all areas of Iran. Unlike Iraq, there would be virtually no Sunni-Shia conflict to hamper recruitment or to divide loyalties in Iran. This would facilitate the establishment of Basij bases and development of popular support for the both the organization and the regime. Significantly, maintaining the regime in power was the primary purpose of the Basij just as it was for the Saddam Fedayeen. However, the Fedayeen's primary method of maintaining regime stability however was terror. In contrast, the Basij's primary method was to extend its influence throughout Iran by expanding its organization and, consequently, permeating Basij "values" throughout Iranian society.

Despite these differences, the Basij was not universally accepted in Iran and, like the Fedayeen, it was a small organization relative to the population as a whole. The Basij developed a reputation for brutality and repression in support of the regime that tended to overshadow its more positive efforts in society. This brutality had the potential to alienate the Basij from the Iranian people, who already view them with some skepticism. . They conducted training with terrorist groups and were even condemned within the Iranian parliament for training to conduct suicide attacks. Despite the rhetoric of the Iranian leadership, the Basij would not be impregnable to attack by the United States as a part of a larger conflict and, as a result, they could be defeated if isolated from the Iranian people.

CONCLUSION

> Warfare is now an interlocking system of actions-political, economic, psychological, military-that aims at the *overthrow of the established authority in a country and its replacement by another regime*. To achieve this end, the aggressor tries to exploit the internal tensions of the country attacked-ideological, social, religious, economic -any conflict liable to have a profound influence on the population to be conquered.[244]

As the most technologically powerful and capable military in the world launched the invasion, the enemy conventional forces faded away through defeat and fear. Nevertheless, the defenders were not defeated, but instead began using unconventional warfare tactics. They burned stores, picked off lone soldiers or isolated units, and even destroyed local infrastructure to deny its use and comfort to the enemy. The invaders response, however, was purely military, consisting of powerful strikes that closed on empty air. In the end, they were forced to retreat, harried the entire way by the defender's guerrilla forces that appeared from nowhere, dealt death and destruction, and then faded into the surrounding environment. The invaders had attacked one of the most oppressed societies that existed at that time and yet, by appealing to both religious and national sentiment, the defenders were able to rouse the army and people against the foreign invaders.[245] Yes, standing amidst the snows of the Russian winter in 1812, Napoleon should have understood that purely military means alone had failed to conquer Russia. So too did military means alone fail against Iraq almost two hundred years later.

In the event of a war with Iran, the United States Armed Forces can defeat the Basij and prevent it from transitioning into an insurgency, but military means alone will not suffice. Having suffered from conventional overmatch for twelve years, Saddam Hussein knew he could not defeat the United States with his army. In Iraq, the weapons of mass destruction turned out to be a red herring, meant to deceive and delay the Coalition, encourage his own army to fight, and at the

[244] Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1985), 6.

[245] Nafziger, 211.

same time discourage dissent among his generals. Instead, he turned to unconventional means, to force the population into fighting guerrilla war against the Coalition. This achieved two objectives, attrition of the Coalition forces and also demonstrated to the world his hold on the Iraqi people. In short, he targeted international and especially American public opinion, a tactic he had used so effectively during the years leading up to the 2003 Iraq War. To accomplish these goals, he needed an intensely loyal and prepared force to be the backbone of the resistance and enforce loyalty to the regime. The Saddam Fedayeen filled this role for Saddam and trained for a guerrilla fight in the months leading up to the invasion. During the conventional phase of the war, the Saddam Fedayeen, who were originally expected to stay in Baghdad, actually deployed to southern Iraq where they forced both soldiers and civilians to fight. Concurrently, some members went underground to await the beginning of the guerrilla war. This enabled the Saddam Fedayeen to maintain their network and a line of communication to convey orders, funding, and plans for operations. As the war transitioned from conventional to unconventional so too did their tactics but always with the same aim of "arousing and organizing the people" against the Coalition. Initially targeting Coalition assets, and other international and non-governmental organizations, the Saddam Fedayeen transitioned to attacks on nascent Iraqi political support. They targeted local infrastructure and Coalition sponsored Iraqi police and military organizations to demonstrate the new government's ineffectiveness, while concurrently maintaining a lower level of violence against Coalition soldiers to distract and ultimately attrite the Coalition's will to fight. Instead of building support for the return of Saddam, however, they only further isolated themselves from the Iraqi people, even in the Sunni Triangle, which should have been their primary base of support. This set the stage for organizational disillusion, dissolution, and absorption into other, more culturally appealing anti-Coalition organizations. In retrospect, it seems that the decline of the Saddam Fedayeen was inevitable, especially after the capture of Saddam. However, poor assumptions and costly decisions by the United States prior to the invasion, such as the existence of an intact Iraqi economic and political infrastructure, the

deBa'athification policy, and the dissolution of the Ministry of Defense, actually facilitated the existence of the Saddam Fedayeen and other guerilla organizations by creating an environment of resentment or "fertile ground" from which they drew support. In a possible war with Iran, it is this fertile ground that must be minimized to defeat the Basij Militia and prevent their successful transition into a guerrilla force.

Just as in the twelve-year conflict with Iraq, and partly because of it, Iran realized that to defeat the United States, they must use asymmetric means. Since 1991, they have had a front row seat from which to observe Coalition operations against Iraq. As a result, the Iranian Government also came to the conclusion that they could not win a conventional fight against any Coalition led by the United States. They have adopted a defense that included an asymmetric aspect to offset American technological and operational dominance. The experience of Desert Storm taught the Iranians that WMD was one method to offset America's conventional forces, hence their reported development of nuclear facilities required to build nuclear weapons. But from Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Iranians have learned that guerrilla warfare is also an effective tactic against the superior U.S. conventional forces. Similar to Saddam Hussein, the Iranians believed that the American people have no stomach for casualties and would quickly lose interest when faced with the prospect of a large number of killed and wounded soldiers returning home. As a result, the Iranians have developed their own guerrilla warfare capacity in the form of the Niruyeh Moghavemat Basij militia. Considered the most loyal force the regime has, the Basij is spread throughout Iranian society to build support for the regime, enforce Islamic values, and inhibit any dissent. They are already engaged in Mao's first phase of guerilla warfare, "arousing and organizing the people" for both the culture war against the West and for the potential military conflict with the primary source of this culture war, the United States. The Basij has trained in guerrilla warfare tactics with terrorist elements. They have been condemned in the Iranian parliament for introducing the terrorist tactic of suicide attacks into exercises. However, the

primary difference between the Saddam Fedayeen and the Basij, and what makes the latter much more dangerous, was their religious rather than secular ideology.

The introduction of religion and religious extremists into the guerrilla war in Iraq played a large part in encouraging the dissolution of the Saddam Fedayeen. For the Basij, and Iran in general, however, religion has been a unifying force. If a war with the United States is painted in terms of Islam versus the infidel, then the likelihood of the Iranian people being ideologically committed to resistance will be much higher and much harder to sever. The capture of Khameini or Ahmadinejad would not have the same effect on the guerrillas than the capture of Saddam Hussein. However, the Iranian version of a theocracy has created not a synthesis of church and state but a unique dichotomy of separate and distinct infrastructures, one elected and one unelected. In their political structure, democracy exists but it is severely circumscribed by the unelected portion controlled by the Supreme Leader and has the authority to invalidate results of the democratic process. The Iranian people can vote in presidential and parliamentary elections, but only for approved candidates. Any legislative action by these elected officials was subject to review by the Guardian Council for Islamic and Constitutional compatibility. In the past, radio broadcasts into Iran have been made to discredit the regime, as distinct from Islam and the democratic process, and were successful in increasing discontent and moving the Iranian people to action. However, any dissent or protest against the system is ruthlessly crushed by the Basij, who have already demonstrated the capacity and willingness to fire on their fellow countrymen.

This same capacity for brutal repression has the potential to alienate the Basij from the Iranian people, just as it alienated the Saddam Fedayeen from the Iraqi Shia and Kurdish populations. In a guerilla war the Basij would have the same requirement to build and maintain support amongst the Iranian people that the Saddam Fedayeen had but failed to accomplish in Iraq. As in Iraq, the infrastructure is limited and dilapidated, an easy target whose incapacitation can be used to foment or increase discontent with any occupying force unless mitigation is planned and prepared for before the invasion is initiated. Attacking the infrastructure, however, is

a two edged sword, with the potential to reduce support for the guerrillas rather than enhancing it. People who see the Basij as repressive already would tend to be further alienated by witnessing the Basij destroying their cities and way of life. In the end, it would not be a short nor easy task to convince the Iranian people that an invasion to conduct regime change was in their interests, but it would not be impossible.

The United States Armed Forces can defeat the Basij and prevent it from transitioning into an insurgency, but it will take more than just military means. It will require a systematic attack along the political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, and information conceptual avenues of approach. The Basij cannot be wished away. Initial assumptions must include that the population will have hostile elements within it and that it will not automatically submit to overwhelming conventional military power but must be actively won over. They must include the assumption that the infrastructure will have to be secured, repaired, and improved as a means of isolating the Basij and gaining popular support. That the government, even the elected portion, will not be operating, but that elected officials and bureaucrats must be coaxed back into government service and not summarily dismissed to swell the ranks of the discontented. Most of all, even the members of the unelected portion of the current Iranian Governmental system must be given the opportunity to fit into the future of Iran and not disabused of hope to mitigate potential anti-Coalition recruiting efforts. In Iran, there exist distinct tensions within society that may be exploited "to have a profound influence on the population to be conquered." The final assumption is that the Coalition would be seen as an invader, regardless of any long-term beneficent intentions, and war brings suffering. Humanity will hang on a "cross of iron" but the key to long-term victory is to ensure that "humanity" does not hang too long.[246] The Basij can be defeated and prevented from initiating a prolonged, costly, and devastating guerrilla war that

[246] See Appendix A for Dwight D Eisenhower, "The Chance for Peace," Speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors on 16 April 1953, Dwight David Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Available from http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/chance.htm, Internet, Accessed on 21 February 2006.

compounds the suffering on both sides. However, it will take a willingness to mobilize all of America's resources and not just the nation's soldiers. In short, blood and treasure will be required to defeat the Basij and Iran, but an unwillingness to provide the latter ensures the unnecessary expenditure of the former.

APPENDIX A: The Chance for Peace

On 16 April 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower gave this speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors. In it he compares the costs of preparing for war against the Soviet Union with uses that would be more beneficial to mankind if used for peaceful purposes. It is given at the close of the Korean War and addresses the conditions that must be met to ensure a lasting peace. These are conditions that must also be met to bring closure to the War in Iraq and a future war with Iran. Though the speech is directed at post-Stalin era leaders of the Soviet Union, many of the precepts outlined continue to echo long after that nation has disappeared from the face of the earth. It is a supreme irony that in President Eisenhower's plea for peace is a vague blueprint to not just defeat the enemy but to win future conflicts. [247]

In this spring of 1953 the free world weighs one question above all others: the chance for a just peace for all peoples.

To weigh this chance is to summon instantly to mind another recent moment of great decision. It came with that yet more hopeful spring of 1945, bright with the promise of victory and of freedom. The hope of all just men in that moment too was a just and lasting peace.

The 8 years that have passed have seen that hope waver, grow dim, and almost die. And the shadow of fear again has darkly lengthened across the world.

Today the hope of free men remains stubborn and brave, but it is sternly disciplined by experience. It shuns not only all crude counsel of despair but also the self-deceit of easy illusion. It weighs the chance for peace with sure, clear knowledge of what happened to the vain hope of 1945.

In that spring of victory the soldiers of the Western Allies met the soldiers of Russia in the center of Europe. They were triumphant comrades in arms. Their peoples shared the joyous prospect of building, in honor of their dead, the only fitting monument-an age of just peace. All these war-weary peoples shared too this concrete, decent purpose: to guard vigilantly against the domination ever again of any part of the world by a single, unbridled aggressive power.

This common purpose lasted an instant and perished. The nations of the world divided to follow two distinct roads.

The United States and our valued friends, the other free nations, chose one road.

The leaders of the Soviet Union chose another.

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[247] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "The Chance for Peace," 16 April 1953, Dwight David Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Available from http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/chance.htm, Internet, Accessed on 21 February 2006.

The way chosen by the United States was plainly marked by a few clear precepts, which govern its conduct in world affairs.

First: No people on earth can be held, as a people, to be enemy, for all humanity shares the common hunger for peace and fellowship and justice.

Second: No nation's security and well-being can be lastingly achieved in isolation but only in effective cooperation with fellow-nations.

Third: Any nation's right to form of government and an economic system of its own choosing is *inalienable*.

Fourth: Any nation's attempt to dictate to other nations their form of government is *indefensible*.

And fifth: A nation's hope of lasting peace cannot be firmly based upon any race in armaments but rather upon just relations and honest understanding with all other nations.

In the light of these principles the citizens of the United States defined the way they proposed to follow, through the aftermath of war, toward true peace.

This way was faithful to the spirit that inspired the United Nations: to prohibit strife, to relieve tensions, to banish fears. This way was to control and to reduce armaments. This way was to allow all nations to devote their energies and resources to the great and good tasks of healing the war's wounds, of clothing and feeding and housing the needy, of perfecting a just political life, of enjoying the fruits of their own free toil.

The Soviet government held a vastly different vision of the future.

In the world of its design, security was to be found, not in mutual trust and mutual aid but in *force*: huge armies, subversion, rule of neighbor nations. The goal was power superiority at all costs. Security was to be sought by denying it to all others.

The result has been tragic for the world and, for the Soviet Union, it has also been ironic.

The amassing of the Soviet power alerted free nations to a new danger of aggression. It compelled them in self-defense to spend unprecedented money and energy for armaments. It forced them to develop weapons of war now capable of inflicting instant and terrible punishment upon any aggressor.

It instilled in the free nations-and let none doubt this-the unshakable conviction that, as long as there persists a threat to freedom, they must, at any cost, remain armed, strong, and ready for the risk of war.

It inspired them-and let none doubt this-to attain a unity of purpose and will beyond the power of propaganda or pressure to break, now or ever.

There remained, however, one thing essentially unchanged and unaffected by Soviet conduct: the readiness of the free nations to welcome sincerely any genuine evidence of peaceful purpose enabling all peoples again to resume their common quest of just peace.

The free nations, most solemnly and repeatedly, have assured the Soviet Union that their firm association has never had any aggressive purpose whatsoever. Soviet leaders, however, have seemed to persuade themselves, or tried to persuade their people, otherwise.

And so it has come to pass that the Soviet Union itself has shared and suffered the very fears it has fostered in the rest of the world.

This has been the way of life forged by 8 years of fear and force.

What can the world, or any nation in it, hope for if no turning is found on this dread road?

The worst to be feared and the best to be expected can be simply stated.

The *worst* is atomic war.

The *best* would be this: a life of perpetual fear and tension; a burden of arms draining the wealth and the labor of all peoples; a wasting of strength that defies the American system or the Soviet system or any system to achieve true abundance and happiness for the peoples of this earth.

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.

This world in arms is not spending money alone.

It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.

The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities.

It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population.

It is two fine, fully equipped hospitals.

It is some 50 miles of concrete highway.

We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat.

We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people.

This, I repeat, is the best way of life to be found on the road the world has been taking.

This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. **Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.**

These plain and cruel truths define the peril and point the hope that come with this spring of 1953.

This is one of those times in the affairs of nations when the gravest choices must be made, if there is to be a turning toward a just and lasting peace.

It is a moment that calls upon the governments of the world to speak their intentions with simplicity and with honesty.

It calls upon them to answer the questions that stirs the hearts of all sane men: *is there no other way the world may live?*

The world knows that an era ended with the death of Joseph Stalin. The extraordinary 30-year span of his rule saw the Soviet Empire expand to reach from the Baltic Sea to the Sea of Japan, finally to dominate 800 million souls.

The Soviet system shaped by Stalin and his predecessors was born of one World War. It survived the stubborn and often amazing courage of Second World War. It has lived to threaten a third.

Now, a new leadership has assumed power in the Soviet Union. It links to the past, however strong, cannot bind it completely. Its future is, in great part, its own to make.

This new leadership confronts a free world aroused, as rarely in its history, by the will to stay free.

This free world knows, out of bitter wisdom of experience, that vigilance and sacrifice are the price of liberty.

It knows that the defense of Western Europe imperatively demands the unity of purpose and action made possible by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, embracing a European Defense Community.

It knows that Western Germany deserves to be a free and equal partner in this community and that this, for Germany, is the only safe way to full, final unity.

It knows that aggression in Korea and in Southeast Asia are threats to the whole free community to be met by united action.

This is the kind of free world which the new Soviet leadership confront. It is a world that demands and expects the fullest respect of its rights and interests. It is a world that will always accord the same respect to all others.

So the new Soviet leadership now has a precious opportunity to awaken, with the rest of the world, to the point of peril reached and to help turn the tide of history.

Will it do this?

We do not yet know. Recent statements and gestures of Soviet leaders give some evidence that they may recognize this critical moment.

We welcome every honest act of peace.

We care nothing for mere rhetoric.

We are only for sincerity of peaceful purpose attested by deeds. The opportunities for such deeds are many. The performance of a great number of them waits upon no complex protocol but upon the simple will to do them. Even a few such clear and specific acts, such as the Soviet Union's signature upon the Austrian treaty or its release of thousands of prisoners still held from World War II, would be impressive signs of sincere intent. They would carry a power of persuasion not to be matched by any amount of oratory.

This we do know: a world that begins to witness the rebirth of trust among nations *can* find its way to a peace that is neither partial nor punitive.

With all who will work in good faith toward such a peace, we are ready, with renewed resolve, to strive to redeem the near-lost hopes of our day.

The first great step along this way must be the conclusion of an honorable armistice in Korea.

This means the immediate cessation of hostilities and the prompt initiation of political discussions leading to the holding of free elections in a united Korea.

It should mean, no less importantly, an end to the direct and indirect attacks upon the security of Indochina and Malaya. For any armistice in Korea that merely released aggressive armies to attack elsewhere would be fraud.

We seek, throughout Asia as throughout the world, a peace that is true and total.

Out of this can grow a still wider task-the achieving of just political settlements for the other serious and specific issues between the free world and the Soviet Union.

None of these issues, great or small, is insoluble-given only the will to respect the rights of all nations.

Again we say: the United States is ready to assume its just part.

We have already done all within our power to speed conclusion of the treaty with Austria, which will free that country from economic exploitation and from occupation by foreign troops.

We are ready not only to press forward with the present plans for closer unity of the nations of Western Europe by also, upon that foundation, to strive to foster a broader European community, conducive to the free movement of persons, of trade, and of ideas.

This community would include a free and united Germany, with a government based upon free and secret elections.

This free community and the full independence of the East European nations could mean the end of present unnatural division of Europe.

As progress in all these areas strengthens world trust, we could proceed concurrently with the next great work-the reduction of the burden of armaments now weighing upon the world. To this end we would welcome and enter into the most solemn agreements. These could properly include:

1. The limitation, by absolute numbers or by an agreed international ratio, of the sizes of the military and security forces of all nations.

2. A commitment by all nations to set an agreed limit upon that proportion of total production of certain strategic materials to be devoted to military purposes.

3. International control of atomic energy to promote its use for peaceful purposes only and to insure the prohibition of atomic weapons.

4. A limitation or prohibition of other categories of weapons of great destructiveness.

5. The enforcement of all these agreed limitations and prohibitions by adequate safeguards, including a practical system of inspection under the United Nations.

The details of such disarmament programs are manifestly critical and complex. Neither the United States nor any other nation can properly claim to possess a perfect, immutable formula. But the formula matters less than the faith-the good faith without which no formula can work justly and effectively.

The fruit of success in all these tasks would present the world with the greatest task, and the greatest opportunity, of all. It is this: the dedication of the energies, the resources, and the imaginations of all peaceful nations to a new kind of war. This would be a declared total war, not upon any human enemy but upon the brute forces of poverty and need.

The peace we seek, founded upon decent trust and cooperative effort among nations, can be fortified, not by weapons of war but by wheat and by cotton, by milk and by wool, by meat and by timber and by rice. These are words that translate into every language on earth. These are needs that challenge this world in arms.

This idea of a just and peaceful world is not new or strange to us. It inspired the people of the United States to initiate the European Recovery Program in 1947. That program was prepared to treat, with like and equal concern, the needs of Eastern and Western Europe.

We are prepared to reaffirm, with the most concrete evidence, our readiness to help build a world in which all peoples can be productive and prosperous.

This Government is ready to ask its people to join with all nations in devoting a substantial percentage of the savings achieved by disarmament to a fund for world aid and reconstruction. The purposes of this great work would be to help other peoples to develop the under developed areas of the world, to stimulate profitability and fair world trade, to assist all peoples to know the blessings of productive freedom.

The monuments to this new kind of war would be these: roads and schools, hospitals and homes, food and health.

We are ready, in short, to dedicate our strength to serving the *needs*, rather than the *fears*, of the world.

We are ready, by these and all such actions, to make of the United Nations an institution that can effectively guard the peace and security of all peoples.

I know of nothing I can add to make plainer the sincere purpose of the United States.

I know of no course, other than that marked by these and similar actions, that can be called the highway of peace.

I know of only one question upon which progress waits. It is this:

What is the Soviet Union ready to do?

Whatever the answer be, let it be plainly spoken.

Again we say: the hunger for peace is too great, the hour in history too late, for any government to mock men's hopes with mere words and promises and gestures.

The test of truth is simple. There can be no persuasion but by deeds.

Is the new leadership of Soviet Union prepared to use its decisive influence in the Communist world, including control of the flow of arms, to bring not merely an expedient truce in Korea but genuine peace in Asia?

Is it prepared to allow other nations, including those of Eastern Europe, the free choice of their own forms of government?

Is it prepared to act in concert with others upon serious disarmament proposals to be made firmly effective by stringent U.N. control and inspection?

If not, where then is the concrete evidence of the Soviet Union's concern for peace?

The test is clear.

There is, before all peoples, a precious chance to turn the black tide of events. If we failed to strive to seize this chance, the judgment of future ages would be harsh and just.

If we strive but fail and the world remains armed against itself, it at least need be divided no longer in its clear knowledge of who has condemned humankind to this fate.

The purpose of the United States, in stating these proposals, is simple and clear.

These proposals spring, without ulterior purpose or political passion, from our calm conviction that the hunger for peace is in the hearts of all peoples--those of Russia and of China no less than of our own country.

They conform to our firm faith that God created men to enjoy, not destroy, the fruits of the earth and of their own toil.

They aspire to this: the lifting, from the backs and from the hearts of men, of their burden of arms and of fears, so that they may find before them a golden age of freedom and of peace.

APPENDIX B: COG Analysis Graphic

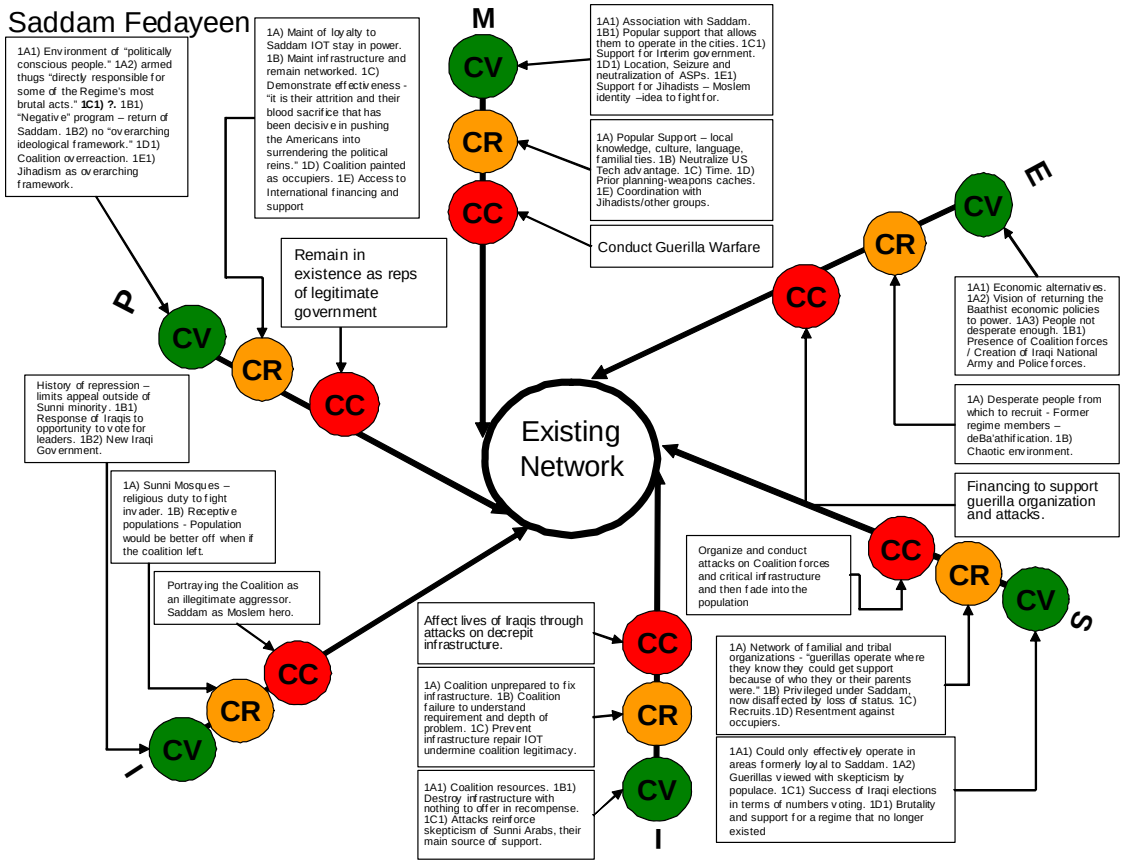

Figure 1. Center of Gravity Analysis of the Saddam Fedayeen as a Guerrilla Force.

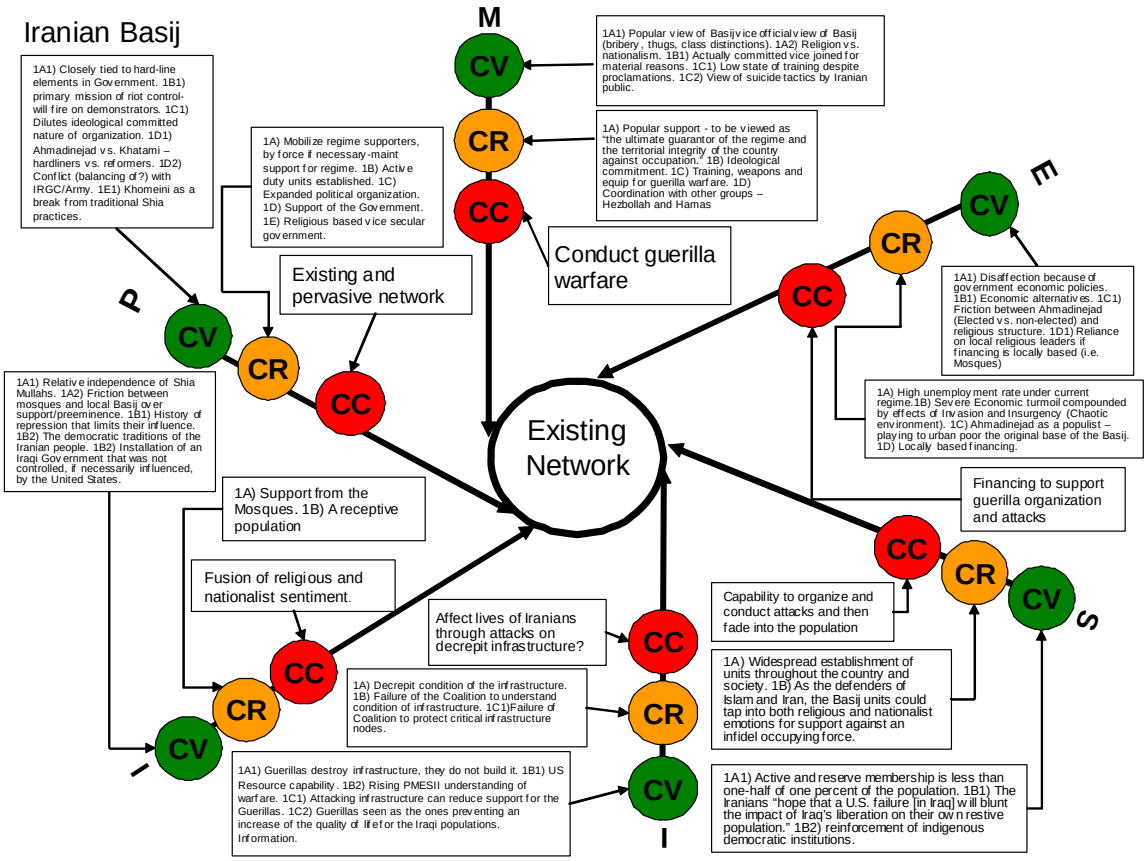

Figure 2. Center of Gravity Analysis of the Iranian Basij as a Potential Guerrilla Force.

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